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BOTHWELL.

πολλὰ μὲν γᾶ τρέφει
δεινὰ δειμάτων ἄχη,
πόντιαί τ' ἀγκάλαι κνωδάλων
ἀνταίων βροτοῖσι
πλάθουσι, βλαστοῦσι καὶ πεδαίχμιοι
λαμπάδες πεδάοροι,
πτανά τε καὶ πεδοβάμονα, κἀνεμοέντων
αἰγίδων φράσαι κότον.
ἀλλ' ὑπέρτολμον ἀν-
δρὸς φρόνημα τίς λέγοι,
καὶ γυναικῶν φρεσὶν τλημόνων;
καὶ παντόλμους
ἔρωτας ἄταισι συννόμους βροτῶν,
ξυζύγους θ' ὁμαυλίας;
θηλυκρατὴς ἀπέρωτος ἔρως παρανικᾷ
κνωδάλων τε καὶ βροτῶν.

Aesch. *Cho.* 585–601.

BOTHWELL:

A TRAGEDY.

BY

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

SECOND EDITION.

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Of California.

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1874.

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B67
1874

À VICTOR HUGO.

Comme un fleuve qui donne à l'océan son âme,
J'apporte au lieu sacré d'où le vers tonne et luit
Mon drame épique et plein de tumulte et de flamme,
Où vibre un siècle éteint, où flotte un jour qui fuit.

Un peuple qui rugit sous les pieds d'une femme
Passe, et son souffle emplit d'aube et d'ombre et de bruit
Un ciel âpre et guerrier qui luit comme une lame
Sur l'avenir debout, sur le passé détruit.

Au fond des cieux hagards, par l'orage battue,
Une figure d'ombre et d'étoiles vêtue
Pleure et menace et brille en s'évanouissant;

Éclair d'amour qui blesse et de haine qui tue,
Fleur éclose au sommet du siècle éblouissant,
Rose à tige épineuse et que rougit le sang.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MARY STUART.
MARY BEATON.
MARY SEYTON.
MARY CARMICHAEL.
JANE GORDON, *Countess of Bothwell.*
JANET STUART, *Countess of Argyle.*
MARGARET LADY DOUGLAS *of Lochleven.*
LADY RERES.
HENRY LORD DARNLEY, *King Consort.*
JAMES HEPBURN, *Earl of Bothwell.*
JAMES STUART, *Earl of Murray.*
JAMES DOUGLAS, *Earl of Morton.*
WILLIAM MAITLAND *of Lethington, Secretary of State.*
JOHN KNOX.
DAVID RIZZIO.
The Earls of HUNTLEY, ARGYLE, CAITHNESS, ROTHES, CASSILIS, ATHOL, *and* MAR.
Lords HERRIES, LINDSAY, RUTHVEN, FLEMING, SEYTON, BOYD, OCHILTREE, HUME, ARBROATH, *and* MAXWELL.
The younger RUTHVEN.
THE MASTER OF OCHILTREE, *son to Lord Ochiltree.*
THE MASTER OF MAXWELL, *son to Lord Herries.*
SIR JAMES MELVILLE.
SIR ROBERT MELVILLE.
SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS, *uncle to Darnley.*
SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS *of Lochleven.*
GEORGE DOUGLAS, *his brother.*
SIR WILLIAM KIRKALDY *of Grange.*
LORD ROBERT STUART, *Abbot of St. Cross.*
DU CROC, *Ambassador from France.*
SIR NICHOLAS THROGMORTON, *Ambassador from England.*
JOHN HAMILTON, *Archbishop of St. Andrew's.*
JOHN LESLIE, *Bishop of Ross.*
ARTHUR ERSKINE, *Captain of the Guard.*
ANTHONY STANDEN *and* STUART OF TRAQUAIR, *Equerries.*
JOHN ERSKINE *of Dun.*
ANDREW KER *of Fauldonside.*
HENRY DRUMMOND *of Ricarton.*
ARCHIBALD BEATON.
JOHN HEPBURN *of Bolton,* ORMISTON, HAY *of Talla, Conspirators with Bothwell.*
CRAWFORD, NELSON, TAYLOR, *servants to Darnley.*
NICHOLAS HUBERT, *surnamed* PARIS, *servant to Bothwell.*
THE PROVOST OF EDINBURGH.
ROBERT CUNNINGHAM, *steward to the Earl of Lennox.*
Page and Girl attending on Lady Lochleven.

Burgesses, Citizens, Soldiers, Attendants, &c.

TIME—MARCH 9, 1566, TO MAY 16, 1568.

ACT I.

DAVID RIZZIO.

TIME, MARCH 9, 1566.

ACT I.

Scene I.—Holyrood.

Enter Darnley *and* Mary Carmichael.

Darnley. But you will not believe me though you hear;
You have no faith; you steer by sight, and see
This fellow gilt and garnished with her grace
Sit covered by the queen where lords stand bare
And jet before them lordlier; and the sight
Makes firm your faith that in his hand and eye
This land is but a harp to play upon,
Whose strings may turn to serpents or to swords
To maim his hand or charm his eye to death.
You have no faith to see this, or to read
The sentence that ensuing shall write me king,
And worth men's fears or faiths: lo, now you laugh,
As though my hope were braggart, and myself
A fool and mouthpiece of its foolish vaunt:
You have no faith.

Mary Carmichael. I have no wit nor will
To choose between St. David for my lord
And sweet St. Henry.

Darnley. Nay, King David now,
King David psalmist; but for all his song
I doubt he hath lost the old trick of touch he had
Once in the sword-play.

Mary Carmichael. See you play not Saul,
Who are something of his stature in our eyes,
Much of his mighty presence; be it not said
He hath snipt your skirts already.

Darnley. Who said that?
Who speaks of me so, lies to the blood and bone,
To the heart and soul lies. I am no king mayhap—
I do not say yet I shall die no king—
God knows that, and is wise—but man I am,
Look else, who love you——

Mary Carmichael. Sir, be king for me,
It shall content my will to youward, seeing
I take you to be royal, and myself
Honest.

Darnley. Why honest? what a gibe is this!
What make you of me?

Mary Carmichael. Yea, what should I make?
'Tis time I were on service.

Darnley. O, the queen's?
She gets good service, excellent service done,
And worthy servants hath she—a liberal queen.
Well, if you will. [*Exit* MARY CARMICHAEL.
I would the month were out.
If earth were easier by just one less knave,
I might sleep well and laugh and walk at ease,

With none to mate me.

Enter MORTON.

Ah, my good lord and friend,
I had somewhat I would say—but let words be.
The man you know of—I would you had made him safe;
I would have told you this much.

Morton. Sir, the earl
Murray being with us in the main thing here,
Though he keep hand from the red handiwork,
Shall enough help us.

Darnley. Let him know it not then:
Let him stand by: he must not know it. Why, well,
It is the more our honour: yet would God
He, being not with us, were not anywhere,
But dead, sir, dead. I say, who hath eyes to see
May see him dangerous to us, and manifest.
Ye have no eyes who see not: for my part,
I noted him at once. Sir, by this light,
When I first saw him—and I have eyes to see—
I knew what manner of meaning in his face
Lay privy and folded up and sealed and signed.
I would you lords had sight and heart like mine,
He should not long live dangerous; yet, God wot,
For my poor personal peril I would match
This body against his better.

Morton. There's no need
Of iron words and matches here of men,
Save this we meet upon; which being played out
Leaves our hands full and henceforth peaceable.

For the earl, he makes no part of men's designs,
Nor would I have you keen to strive with him
Who lies yet still and is well liked of men
That are well-willers to this common state
And the open peace of the people. Let him be;
Keep your heart here.

Darnley. Here is it fixed and set
With roots of iron. 'Tis more honour to us,
Being so more perilous, to have no help
Of popular hands and common friendliness,
But our hearts helpful only. I am sure of her,
That she suspects not—I do surely think:
But yet she is subtle and secret-souled and wise,
Wise woman-fashion; look you be not caught
Through too much trust in what of her is weak,
In her light mind and mutability,
For subtlety lies close in her light wit,
And wisdom wantons in her wantonness:
I know her, I know her; I have seen ere now, and am
Not all to learn in women.

Morton. I believe
Your grace hath grace with women as with men,
And skill of sense alike in those and these,
I doubt not; which is well and profitable.
For this, how shall she know it, except you slip
And let her wring the truth out from your hand,
Or kiss the truth out, hanging mouth on mouth?
But if no pressure press from hand or lip
The unripe truth, the fruit so soon so red,
What can she to us, though doubting, help or harm

How, if she know not surely?
Darnley. So I say.
And we that do it, we do it for all men's good,
For the main people's love, thankworthily—
And this is matter of law we take in hand,
Is it not, lawful? for the man is judged,
Doomed dead and damned by sentence, in good deed,
Though not by scruple and show of trial and test,
By clearer cause and purer policy—
We cannot stand toward any accountable
As for a slaughter, a treasonable shame,
To mark us red in the world's eyes? no man
Can say our fame is blotted with his blood,
No man, albeit he hate us, bring in doubt—
Woman or man—our right, our absolute law,
Giving us leave—nay, bidding us do so?
So that we stand after the deed as now,
In no more danger or fear?
Morton. In less fear, you,
And much more honour; now it might please you fear,
Being overborne of woman and fast bound
With feminine shame and weakness; the man's strength,
The sinew and nerve and spirit of royalty,
Hers, and all power to use her power on you
Hers, and all honour and pleasure of high place
That should make sweet your lips and bright your brows
Hers, and the mockery of mismarried men
Yours.

Darnley. Nay, by God I said so; why, I knew it;
I told you thus aforetime, did I not?

Morton. Truly and wisely; if this content you thus,
He is even our king.

Darnley. Methinks he should be king,
And I, God wot, content. Here came a man
Some few days back, a goodly, a gentleman,
An honourable, that for king knave's behoof
Was stript out of the better of all his lands
As I of what was best part of my wife,
My place, and honour that grows up with hers—
For of her love small fruit was left to strip,
Few leaves for winter weather—but of these,
These good things, am I stript as bare as shame,
Even beggared as was this man. By God's light,
It seems this is but justice, doth it not,
And I so gentle and temperate—as, by God,
I was not nor I will not.

Morton. There's more need
That you seem resolutely temperate then
And temperately be resolute, I say,
Till the hour to cast off temperance and put on
Plain passion for the habit of your heart
Which now it wears in darkness, and by day
The cloak and hood of temperance. But these fits
And gusts and starts of will and will not, these
Blow you this side and that side till men see
Too much, and trust too little.

Darnley. O sir, you are wise,
You are honourable, and a counsellor, and my friend,

And I too light, too light—yet by this light
I think I am worth more than your counsel is
If I be worth this work here to be done—
I think I am so much.

Morton. It may well be, sir,
And you much wiser; yet forbear your wrath
If you would have it ready to your hand.

Darnley. I will forbear nothing—nor nothing bear—
Nor live by no man's bidding. This year through
I have even been surfeited with wise men's breath
And winds of wordy weather round mine ears—
Do this, spare that, walk thus, look otherwise,
Hold your head kingly, or wisely bow your neck—
A man might come to doubt himself no man,
Being so long childlike handled. Now, look you,
Look she, look God to it if I be not man!
Now is my way swept, and my foot shod now,
My wallet full now for the travelling day
That I fare forth and forward, arrow-straight,
Girt for the goal, red battle-ripe at need—
As need there is—you are sure—and utter need?

Morton. Is my lord not sure?

Darnley. Ay, as sure as you—
Surer maybe—the need is more of mine—
This grazes your bare hand that grates my heart:
Your queen it is wrongs you, and me my wife.

Morton. You see that sure, too? sharp sight, have you not?

Darnley. I saw it, I first—I knew her—who knew her but I,

That swore—at least I swore to mine own soul,
Would not for shame's sake swear out wide to the world,
But in myself swore with my heart to hear—
There was more in it, in all their commerce, more
Than the mere music—he is warped, worn through,
Bow-bent, uncomely in wholesome eyes that see
Straight, seeing him crooked—but she seeing awry
Sees the man straight enough for paramour.
This I saw, this I swore to—silently,
Not loud but sure, till time should be to speak
Sword's language, no fool's jargon like his tongue,
But plain broad steel speech and intelligible,
Though not to the ear, Italian's be it or Scot's,
But to the very life intelligible,
To the loosed soul, to the shed blood—for blood
There must be—one must slay him—you are sure—
as I am?
For I was sure of it always—while you said,
All you, 'twas council-stuff, state-handicraft,
Cunning of card-play between here and there,
I knew 'twas this and more, sir, I kept sight,
Kept heed of her, what thing she was, what wife,
What manner of stateswoman and governess—
More than all you saw—did you see it or I?

Morton. You saw first surely, and some one spoke
first out—
You had eyes, he tongue—and both bear witness now
If this must be or not be.

Darnley. Death, is that?
I must kill—bid you kill him?

Morton. Nowise, sir;
As little need of one as the other is here;
As little of either as no need at all.
Darnley. You doubt or hand or tongue then, sir, of mine?
I would not strike, if need were, or bid strike?
Morton. Neither we doubt, nor neither do we need—
Having you with us.
Darnley. 'Twas but so you meant?
I had else been angry—nay, half wroth I was—
Not as I took it—I had else been wroth indeed.
Morton. That had been grievous to me and perilous,
This time of all times.
Darnley. Ay, you need me, ay,
I am somewhat now then, somewhat more than wont,
Who thus long have been nothing—but will be?
Well, so, I am with you. Shall he die—how soon?
To-day I had said, but haply not to-day—
There might fall somewhat, something slip awry,
In such swift work, ha? Then, what day? Perchance
'Twere better he died abed—or were there charms,
Spells—if himself though be not witch, drug-proof
'Tis like, and devil-witted, being a knave
Born poisonous and bred sorcerous like his kind—
We have heard what manner of plague his south land spawns,
What sort of kith and kin to hell and him,
How subtle in starry riddles and earth's roots

The dog-leeches that kill your soul in you,
Or only body, or both, as Catherine please,
Mother that was to our Mary—have we not?
We must look to it, and closely look.
Morton. My lord,
Of so much being so sure, of this be too;
That surely and soon in some wise very sure
We are quit of him with God's help or without.
Darnley. Why, that were well. I hold you resolute;
I pray you stay so, and all is well enough.
We have talked our time out—you had all to say—
All the thing's carriage—and my mind to take,
Which with plain heart I have made you understand.
My mind is, he must die then: keep you there. [*Exit.*
Morton. Had God but plagued Egypt with fools for flies,
His Jews had sped the quicker.

Enter MARY BEATON.

Is the queen risen,
Lady?
Mary Beaton. Not yet. Was not the king with you?
I heard him high and shrill.
Morton. Ay, he was here,
If anywhere the king be. You are sad.
Mary Beaton. I am not blithe of bearing, I wot well,
But the word sad is sadder than I am.
Is he not vexed?
Morton. I have never seen him else,
Save when light-heartedness and loose-hung brain

Have made him proud and drunken: as of late
He has been but seldom. There's one sad at least;
If it be sad to hang the head apart,
Walk with brows drawn and eyes disquieted,
Speak sullen under breath, and shrug and swear,
If any move him, and then again fall dumb;
He has changed his fresher manner, and put off
What little grace made his ungracious youth
Fair in men's eyes a little; if this last,
He will not long last in men's lordship here,
Except by love and favour shown of the queen.

Mary Beaton. There he sits strong in surety; yet men say
He is discontent, disheartened, for distaste
Of the like love and favour shown of her
(Or not the like, yet too much near the like)
Toward Rizzio; but such men, seeing visionary,
Run wide in talk, and sleep with speech awake
And sight shut fast: are you not of my mind?

Morton. I am most of theirs whose mind is most toward hers,
As whose should be most noble; but in truth
Mine own is moved to hear her gracious heart
Mismade of, her clear courtesies misread,
Misliked her liking, her goodwill maligned,
Even of his mouth who owes life, breath, and place,
Honour and title, even to that clear goodwill,
To that her grace, liking, and courtesy.

Mary Beaton. You mean our lord and hers and king of Scots?

Morton. As kingly a king as masterful a lord,
And no less hers than ours; as strong each way.
Mary Beaton. And he misreads so much the queen's pure heart
As to mistake aloud her manner of life,
And teach the world's broad open popular ear
His graceless commentary on her mere grace
And simple favour shown a simple knave,
Her chamber-child, her varlet? a poor man,
Stranger, skilled little in great men's policies
—Which is strange too, seeing he hath had some chance
To learn some tricks of courts and embassies,
Being therein bred, and not so very a fool
But one might teach him—yet no doubt a man,
Save for such teaching, simple and innocent;
Only what heart, what spirit and wit he has,
Being hot and close as fire on the old faith's side
And the French party's—if his wit were great,
It might do more than simple service soon,
Having her heart as 'twere by the ear which leans
Still toward his saying or singing; but ye know
There is no peril in him, and the king
More fool than he a knave.
Morton. Well, I know not;
My skill is small in tunes, yet I can tell
Discord between kings' ear and people's tongue,
Which hearing as in spirit I forehear
Harsh future music in a state mistuned,
If such men lay but hand upon the keys,
Touch ne'er so slight a string of policy

With ne'er so light a finger : I would the queen,
For the dear faith I bear her, saw but this,
Or that the lords were heavier-eyed to see.

Mary Beaton. Are they so keen of soul as of their sight,
To slay wrong as to see wrong?

Morton. 'Faith, with us
The hand is matched against the eye for speed ;
And these no slower in stroke of sight and sword
Than their sharp-sighted swift-souled forefathers.
I say not this that you should gather fear
Out of my saying to sow in the ear of the queen ;
But for truth's sake ; and truly I do not fear
That I have put fear in you, for you seem
Not lightly fearful to me.

Mary Beaton. I would not be,
Where I might keep good heart and open eye
Nor blind nor fevered with foolhardiness,
As here meseems I may keep ; for I see
No hurt yet nor hurt's danger steer in sight,
Save the mere daily danger of high-raised heads
To be misspoken and misseen of men,
Which is not for high-seated hearts to fear.

Morton. Her heart is high enough, and yours as hers ;
You shall do well to hold your courage fast,
Keeping your wits awake ; whereof myself
I make no doubt, howbeit men fear the queen,
Having our bitter folk and faith to fight,
Out of sharp spirit and high-heartedness

May do such things for love's sake or for wrath's
As fools for fear's sake: which were no less harm
(Turning her wit and heart against herself)
Than to be coward or witless. Fare you well;
I will not doubt but she is well advised. [*Exit.*

Mary Beaton. He is but dead by this then. I did know it;
And yet it strikes upon me sudden and sharp,
As a thing unforethought on. It is strange
To have one's foot as mine is on the verge,
The narrowing threshold of a thing so great,
To have within one's eyeshot the whole way,
The perfect reach of fate from end to end,
From life to life replying and death to death.
This is the first hour of the night, and I
The watcher of the first watch, by whose lamp
The starless sky that grows toward birth of stars
And the unlit earth and obscure air are seen
Pale as the lamp's self yet not well alight.
Yet by the light of my heart's fire, and mind
Kindled, I see what fires of storm, what flaws,
What windy meteors and cross-countering stars,
Shall be through all the watches to the dawn
And bloodlike sunrise of the fire-eyed day.
I am half content already; and yet I would
This watch were through.

Enter the QUEEN, RIZZIO, *and* MARY SEYTON.

Queen. Nay, it is later, sure:
I am idle, I am idle, and flattered; you say wrong,

To find my sloth some pardonable plea,
Which is not pardonable ; a perfect sin,
One writ among the sorest seven of all ;
Enough to load the soul past penitence.
Am I not late indeed ? speak truth and say.

Rizzio. To watchers the sun rises ever late
Though he keep time with summer ; but your grace
Keeps earlier than the sun's time.

Queen. 'Tis but March,
And a scant spring, a sharp and starveling year.
How bitter black the day grows ! one would swear
The weather and earth were of this people's faith,
And their heaven coloured as their thoughts of heaven,
Their light made of their love.

Rizzio. If it might please you
Look out and lift up heart to summer-ward,
There might be sun enough for seeing and sense,
To light men's eyes at and warm hands withal.

Queen. I doubt the winter's white is deeper dyed
And closer worn than I thought like to be ;
This land of mine hath folded itself round
With snow-cold, white, and leprous misbelief,
Till even the spirit is bitten, the blood pinched,
And the heart winter-wounded ; these starved slaves
That feed on frost and suck the snows for drink,
Hating the light for the heat's sake, love the cold :
We want some hotter fire than summer or sun
To burn their dead blood through and change their veins.

Rizzio. Madam, those fires are all but ashen dust:

'Tis by the sun we have now to walk warm.
If I had leave to give good counsel tongue
And wisdom words to work with, I would say
Rather by favour and seasonable grace
Shall your sweet light of summer-speaking looks
Melt the hard mould of earthen hearts, and put
Spring into spirits of snow. Your husband here,
Who was my friend before your lord, being grown
Doubtful, and evil-eyed against himself,
With a thwart wit crossing all counsel, turns
From usward to their close fierce intimacy
Who are bitterest of the faction against faith,
And through their violent friendship has become
His own and very enemy, being moved
Of mere loose heart to vex you. Now there stands
On the other hand, in no wise bound to him,
But as your rebel and his enemy
Cast forth condemned, one that called home again
Might be a bond between the time and you,
Tying the wild world tamer to your hand,
And in your husband's hot and unreined mouth
As bit and bridle against his wandering will.

Queen. What name is his who shall so strengthen me?

Rizzio. Your father gave him half a brother's name.

Queen. I have no brother; a bloodless traitor he is
Who was my father's bastard born. By heaven,
I had rather have his head loose at my foot
Than his tongue's counsel rounded in mine ear.

Rizzio. I would you had called him out of banishment.

Queen. Thou art mad, thou art mad; prate me no more of him.

Rizzio. He is wise, and we need wisdom; penitent,
And God they say loves most his penitents;
Stout-hearted and well-minded toward your grace,
As you shall work him, and beguilable
Now at your need if you but will he be;
And God he knows if there be need of such.

Queen. No need, no need; I am crowned of mine own heart
And of mine own will weaponed; am I queen
To have need of traitors' leave to live by, and reign
By the God's grace of these? I will not have it;
Toward God I swear there shall be no such need.

Rizzio. Yet if there were no need, less harm it were
To have him easily on your royal side
While the time serves that he may serve you in—
Less harm than none, and profit more than less.

Queen. He is a misborn traitor and heretic;
And of his own side baffled, a flat fool,
Who thought to have comfort of Elizabeth,
Large furtherance of my sweet-souled sister's love,
Grace and sure aid of her good plighted word,
Her honourable and precious plighted word,
And secret seal to help him; as she durst not,
Yea, she would fain and durst not.

Rizzio. Please you note——

Queen. It shall not please me; I say she hath made him kneel,
(And this does please me indeed) hath seen him down,
Seen him and spurned him kneeling from her foot,
As my born traitor and subject. David, nay,
But hath thy careful love not made thee mad,
Whose counsel was my sword against him once?
Why, thou wast sworn his slayer, and all that while
He held up head against us thy one word
Bade strike him dead of all men. What, hast thou
Fairly forgot his purpose, were I taken,
To speed thee out of life? his secret bond,
Sealed with himself in spirit, thou shouldst die?
Wast thou not trothplight with that soulless boy,
Ere he might thee, to rid him out of life?
Nay, and thou knowest how dear a cause I have,
And thou, to slay him when the good chance comes,
Which God make speedy toward us; by my hand,
Too little and light to hold up his dead head,
It was my hope to dip it in his life
Made me ride iron-mailed, a soldieress,
All those days through we drove them here and there,
Eastward from Fife, and hither and forth again,
And broken to the border; yea, all day
I thought how worth his life it were to ride
Within the shot-length of my saddlebow
And try my poor and maiden soldiership.
And now I am bidden, and you it is bid me,
Reach my hand forth forgivingly and meek
To strike with his for love and policy?

He is beaten and broken, without help of hope,
Who was mine enemy ever, and ever I knew
How much he was mine enemy; and now maimed,
Wounded, unseated from his power of place,
Shall I raise up again and strengthen him,
Warm and bind up his cold and o'erbled wounds
With piteous cordials? nay, but when I do,
May he have strength to wreak his will on me,
And I be flung under his feet! beside,
He was your mocking-stock this short while since,
You swore, men tell me, Daniot told it me,
Your ghostly man of counsel—why, to him,
He says, you swore the bastard should not bide
With you in Scotland; it made anger at you,
Put passion in their mouths who bear you hard,
That you should threaten kinglike. Hath he moved you
To change your heart and face toward him at once,
Or do you mock, or are struck mad indeed,
That now you turn to bid me cry him home,
Make much of him and sing him to my side?

Rizzio. For all this, madam, if I be not mad,
It were well done to do it. He is a man
Well-loved, well-counselled, and though fast in faith,
Yet howsoever in strong opinion bound,
Not so much overridden of his own mind
As to love no man for faith's single sake;
No fire-brained preacher nor wild-witted knave,
But skilled and reared in state and soldiership.
What doth it need you to misthink of me?

Say it is but this jewel he sends me here
That pleads his part before you; say I am his
And not your servant, or not only of you
Made and again unmakeable; 'tis truth,
He hath given me gifts to be his counsel to you,
And I have taken, and here I plead his part,
Seeing my life hangs upon your life, and yours,
If it be full and even and fortunate
In spite of foes and fears and friends, must hang
On his, unbound from these and bound to you.
We have done ill, having so mighty a match,
So large a wager on this turn of time,
To leave the stakes in hand of a lewd boy,
A fool and thankless; and to save the game
We must play privily and hold secret hands.

Queen. I will not have his hand upon my part,
Though it were safe to sweep up gold and all.

Rizzio. But till our side be strong; then cast him off,
When he hath served to strengthen you so much
You have no need of any strength of his.
Bear with him but till time be and we touch
The heart of the hour that brings our chance to catch
Hope by the flying hair, and to our wheel
Bind fortune and wind-wavering majesty,
To shift no more in the air of any change,
But hang a steady star; then, when the faith
Sits crowned in us that serve her, and you hold
The triple-treasured kingdom in your lap,
What shall forbid you set a sudden foot

Where it may please you, on their hearts or heads
That in their season were found serviceable,
And now are stones of stumbling? Time shapes all:
And service he may do you, or else offence,
Even as you handle this sharp point of time,
To turn its edge this wary way or that;
And for the land and state, why, having served,
He may be seasonably stript out of these
When you would do some friend a courtesy
Who has still been found secret and Catholic,
A lantern's eye of counsel in close dark,
While he did blind man's service; but till then
Let him keep land and name, and all he will,
And blindly serve to the blind end in trust,
To wake a naked fool. That this may be
I am firm in faith, may it be but with your will.

Queen. He will not help us beat his own faith down;
He is no hawk to seel and then to unhood,
Fly at strange fowl and pluck back blind again.

Rizzio. Bethink you, madam, he only of all his kind
Stood out against men hotter in heresy,
Spake down their speeches, overbore Pope Knox,
Broke with his cardinal's college of shrewd saints,
In your free faith's defence, that would have barred you
From custom of religion; and I wot,
Save for his help, small help had found my queen
From Huntley or Hamilton, her faith-fellows,
Or any their co-worshippers with her.

Queen. Thou art ever saying them wrong; they are
stout and sure,
Even they that strove for honour's sake with us:
Their one least fault I am minded to forgive;
True friends in faith, my dear own blood and kin,
No birthless bastards nor mistitled men.
It pleased me bid him into banishment,
And shall not lightly please me bid him back.

Rizzio. Yet some men banished for no less a
cause
It has been known you have loosed from banishment.
I tell you for true heart.

Queen. Nay, I well know it;
You are good and faithful to us, God quit it you,
And well of us loved back; how much, you know,
But more than is our fear of men's missaying.
For me, I find no such foul faultiness
In the lord Bothwell but might well be purged
After long trial of English prison-bands
And proof of loyal lips and close true heart
Whereout no gaoler could pluck dangerous speech,
And then with overpassing to and fro
The strait sea wide enough to wash him white
'Twixt France and us: and all this jarring year
You have seen with what a service, in full field,
Oft in our need he hath served us; nor was it
Such matter of treason and nowise pardonable
To mix his wits with Arran's broken brain
In their device to entrap mine hand with his
For high state's sake and strong-winged policy,

When he was matched with me in most men's mouths
And found not yet for changeling or for fool.
But howsoever, it pleased me pardon him;
And a stout spear for warden have I won.
I have holp myself in help of him, who now
Hath with good works undone his dead misdeeds,
And left their memory drowned in the under sea
That swept them out and washed him in again,
A man remade; and fail me whoso fails,
Him I hold fast my friend; but those cast out
That rose up right between my will and me
To make me thrall and bondslave to their own,
Giving me prison and them swift banishment
Whom I gave honour, and cast the crown away,
And break the old natural heart of royalty,
For foul faith's sake or craft of their miscreed;
That smote with sword or speech against all state,
Not through blind heat or stumbling hardihood,
But hate of holiness and height of mind,
Hateful to kingly truth, haters of kings;
Them though I pardon I would not take to trust,
Nor bind up their loose faith with my belief,
For all assurances of all men born.
Besides, I hate him, singly.

Rizzio. I have said, and say;
Do you as time will turn it; time turns all.

Queen. I do believe there is no man's estate
So miserable, so very a helpless thing,
So trodden under and overborne as mine.
For first the man that I set up for lord,

For master of mine and mate of only me,
Have I perforce put forth of my shamed bed
And broken on his brows the kingless crown,
Finding nor head for gold nor hand for steel
Worth name of king or husband, but the throne
Lordless, the heart of marriage husbandless,
Through his foul follies ; then in the utter world,
In the extreme range and race of my whole life
Through all changed times and places of its change,
Having one friend, I find a foe of him
To my true sense and soul and spirit of thought
That keeps in peace the things of its own peace,
Secret and surely ; in faith, this frets my faith,
Distunes me into discord with myself,
That you should counsel me against my soul.
I pray you do not.

Rizzio. Nay, I will no more.
But if you take not Murray again to trust
At least in short sweet seeming for some while,
So to subdue him as with his own right hand
And all chief with him of his creed and crew,
Then, cleaving to the old counsel, suddenly
Have him attainted, and being so brought in
By summons as your traitor, with good speed
Have off his head ; let him not live to turn ;
Choose you sure tongues to doom him, hands to rid,
And be his slaying his sentence ; for the rest,
Make to you friends Argyle and Chatelherault
And such more temperate of their faction found

As may be servants to your pardoning hand
If they be separable; but anywise
In pardoning these forgive not half his fault
With half their pardon; cut no branch of his
But the root only; strike not but at heart
When you strike him; he hath done and borne too much
To live 'twixt that and this unreconciled,
Having on this hand his conspiracy,
On that your proclamation; his head priced,
His life coursed after with hot hound and horn,
His wife thrust forth hard on her travailing time
With body soft from pangs and delicate
To roam in winter-bound and roofless woods;
These things not wholly with your grace wiped off
And washed with favour and fair-faced love away
Must work within him deadly and desperate.

Queen. Now
I find your counsel in you, no strange tongue,
But the old stout speech and sure; and this same day
Will I set hand to it. I have chosen the lords
That shall attaint in council these men fled
Of mortal treason; and some two hours hence
My tongue through their strange lips shall speak him dead
Who is only my heart's hated among men.
I am gay of heart, light as a spring south-wind,
To feed my soul with his foretasted death.
You know the reason I have, you know the right

And he the danger of it, being no fool,
For fool he is not; I would he were but fool.
O, I feel dancing motions in my feet,
And laughter moving merrily at my lips,
Only to think him dead and hearsed, or hanged—
That were the better. I could dance down his life,
Sing my steps through, treading on his dead neck,
For love of his dead body and cast-out soul.
He shall talk of me to the worm of hell,
Prate in death's ear and with a speechless tongue
Of my dead doings in days gone out. Sweet lord,
David, my good friend and my chancellor,
I thank you for your counsel.

Rizzio. May it be
Prosperously mine! but howsoever, I think
It were not well, when this man is put down,
Though Lethington be wily or Melville wise,
To make your stay of any other man.

Queen. I would I had no state to need no stay;
God witness me, I had rather be reborn
And born a poor mean woman, and live low
With harmless habit and poor purity
Down to my dull death-day, a shepherd's wife,
Than a queen clothed and crowned with force and fear.

Rizzio. Are you so weary of crowns, and would not be
Soon wearier waxen of sheepfolds?

Queen. 'Faith, who knows?
But I would not be weary, let that be

Part of my wish. I could be glad and good
Living so low, with little labours set
And little sleeps and watches, night and day
Falling and flowing as small waves in low sea
From shine to shadow and back, and out and in
Among the firths and reaches of low life :
I would I were away and well. No more,
For dear love talk no more of policy.
Let France and faith and envy and England be,
And kingdom go and people ; I had rather rest
Quiet for all my simple space of life,
With few friends' loves closing my life-days in
And few things known and grace of humble ways—
A loving little life of sweet small works.
Good faith, I was not made for other life ;
Nay, do you think it? I will not hear thereof ;
Let me hear music rather, as simple a song,
If you have any, as these low thoughts of mine,
Some lowly and old-world song of quiet men.

Rizzio. Then is the time for love-songs when the lip
Has no more leave to counsel ; even so be it ;
I will sing simply, and no more counsel you.

Queen. Be not unfriends ; I have made you wroth indeed,
Unknowing, and pray you even for my no fault
Forgive and give me music ; I am athirst
For sweet-tongued pardon only.

Rizzio. If this be harsh,
The pardon be for fault enforced of mine.

Love with shut wings, a little ungrown love,
A blind lost love, alit on my shut heart,
As on an unblown rose an unfledged dove;
Feeble the flight as yet, feeble the flower.
And I said, show me if sleep or love thou art,
Or death or sorrow or some obscurer power;

Show me thyself, if thou be some such power,
If thou be god or spirit, sorrow or love,
That I may praise thee for the thing thou art.
And saying, I felt my soul a sudden flower
Full-fledged of petals, and thereon a dove
Sitting full-feathered, singing at my heart.

Yet the song's burden heavier on my heart
Than a man's burden laid on a child's power.
Surely most bitter of all sweet things thou art,
And sweetest thou of all things bitter, love;
And if a poppy or if a rose thy flower
We know not, nor if thou be kite or dove.

But nightingale is none nor any dove
That sings so long nor is so hot of heart
For love of sorrow or sorrow of any love;
Nor all thy pain hath any or all thy power,
Nor any knows thee if bird or god thou art,
Or whether a thorn to think thee or whether a flower.

But surely will I hold thee a glorious flower,
And thy tongue surely sweeter than the dove
Muttering in mid leaves from a fervent heart
Something divine of some exceeding love,
If thou being god out of a great god's power
Wilt make me also the glad thing thou art.

Will no man's mercy show me where thou art,
That I may bring thee of all my fruit and flower,
That with loud lips and with a molten heart

I may sing all thy praises, till the dove
That I desire to have within my power
Fly at thy bidding to my bosom, love?

Clothed as with power of pinions, O my heart,
Fly like a dove, and seek one sovereign flower,
Whose thrall thou art, and sing for love of love.

Queen. It sings too southerly for this harsh north;
This were a song for summer-sleeping ears,
One to move dancing measures in men's feet
Red-shod with reek o' the vintage. Who went there?
What, hear you not?

Mary Seyton. My lord of Bothwell's foot:
His tread rings iron, as to battle-ward.

Queen. Not his, it was not. See if it be indeed.
'Twas a good song. Something he had with me—
I thank you for your song—I know not what.
Let him come in. Sir, be with us to-night—
I knew it was late indeed—at supper-time.

Rizzio. Madam, till night I take my loyal leave.
God give you good of all things. [*Exit.*

Queen. Doth he mock me?
I care not neither; I know not. Stay with us.

Enter BOTHWELL.

Good morrow, sir: we bade you, did we not?
Be with us after noon; 'tis not noon near,
And you are truer than your own word; and that,
'Tis a true man's and trusty.

Bothwell. True it should be,
Madam, if truth be true, and I your thrall
And truth's for your sake.
Queen. I would know of you —
I know not what—something there was to know.
I would you were not warden—as in truth
I think to unmake you—of the marches there.
'Tis a fierce office. You have a royal sword,
At least a knightly; I would not see it hacked rough
In brawling border dangers.
Bothwell. Anywhere
Hand, hilt, and edge are yours, to turn and take,
Use or throw by, you know it.
Queen. I know it indeed.
I have not many hearts with me, and hold
Precious the hearts I have and the good hands.
Ladies, we have somewhat with our servant here
That needs no counsel and no ear of yours,
So gives you leave. [*Exeunt* MARIES.
I know not why they are gone;
I have nothing with you secret.
Bothwell. Yea, one thing;
You cannot help it; your face and speech and look
Are secret with me in my secret heart.
Queen. I know not that; I would I did know that.
'Tis yet not twelve days since I saw you wed
To my dear friend, and with what eye you know
Who would not, for all love that I might make
And suit to you, give ear to me and be

In mine own chapel at the holy mass
Made one with her; for all the feast we kept,
No jewel of mine bequeathed your wife might buy
Consent of you to take her wedded hand
After the church-rite of her faith and mine;
And how much love went with your policy
I cannot tell; yet was my will content
That you should wed her name and house, to bring
The race of Gordon on our side again,
And have its ruin rebuilded and its might
Restored to do us service; so you said,
And so I thought I knew your mind to stand;
Being so fast bound to me, I need not doubt
She could but hold you by the hand, and I
That had you by the heart need grudge not that,
While time gave order, and expediency
Required of us allowance; but in faith
I know not whether there be faith or no
Save in my heart wherein I know too sure
How little wisdom is to trust in man.
So comes it, as you see, for all my show,
I am ill at heart and tired.

Bothwell. 'Tis your own blame.

Queen. Yea, now, what would you have me? I am yours to do it:
But you say nothing; yet you say too much.
My blame it is, my weary waste of breath,
My wretched hours and empty bloodless life,
My sleepy vigils and my starting sleeps,
All by my fault—if it be fault to be

More than all men loving, all women true,
To hunger with the foodless heart of grief
And wither with the tearless thirst of eyes,
To wander in weak thought through unsown fields
Past unreaped sheaves of vision ; to be blind,
Weak, sick and lame of spirit and poor of soul,
And to live loveless for love's bitter sake
And have to food loathing, and shame for drink,
And see no cease or breach in my long life
Where these might end or die ; my fault it is,
And I will kill my fault : for I that loved
Will live to love no living thing again.

Bothwell. As you will, then.

Queen. Nay, do not tread on me ;
I am lying a worm out of your way, and you
Turn back to bruise me. I am stricken sore enough ;
Do not worse wound me ; I am hurt to the heart.
You change and shift quicker than all good things,
That all change quickly : I am fast, and cannot change.
If you do hold me so, fast in your heart,
You should not surely mock me.

Bothwell. I mock you not.
You are looser and lighter-tempered than the wind,
And say I mock you : 'tis you mock yourself,
And much more me that wot not of your mind,
What would you have and would not.

Queen. Nothing, I,
Nothing but peace, and shall not. By my faith,
I think no man ever loved woman well.
You laugh and thrust your lips up, but 'tis truth,

This that I think, not your light lewd man's thought,
But in my meaning it is bitter true.
By heaven, I have no heart for any on earth,
Any man else, nor any matter of man's,
But love of one man; nay, and never had.
Bothwell. I do believe it, by myself I do,
Who am even the self-same natured; so I know it.
Queen. What heart have you to hurt me? I am no fool
To hate you for your heat of natural heart.
I know you have loved and love not all alike,
But somewhat all; I hate you not for that.
When have I made words of it? sought out times
To wrangle with you? crossed you with myself?
What have I said, what done, by saying or deed
To vex you for my love's sake? and have been
For my part faithful beyond reach of faith,
Kingdomless queen and wife unhusbanded,
Till in you reigning I might reign and rest.
I have kept my body, yea from wedded bed,
And kept mine hand, yea from my sceptre's weight,
That you might have me and my kingdom whole;
What have these done to take you, what to keep,
Worth one day's doing of mine yet? Ah, you know,
For all the shape and show of things without,
For all the marriage and the bodily bond
And fleshly figure of community,
I have loved no man, man never hath had me whole,
I am virgin toward you: O my love, love, love,

This that is not yours in me I abhor,
I pray God for your sake it may be false,
Foolish and foul: I would not have it man,
Not manlike, and not mine, it shall not be,
Being none of love's, and rootless in my soul,
Not growing of my spirit but my blood;
I hate myself till it be born.

Bothwell. Ay, sweet,
You talk now loud of love, but ten days since
Was I not bid love well your friend, and be
True husband to her? what sweet-tongued preacher then
Taught me how faith should best be kept by change
Of passionate fear and pleasure and bright pain
And all their strange sharp sweet solicitudes
For such good gifts as wisdom gives and takes
From hand to married hand of them that wed?
Whose counsel was this wisdom? whose command
This that set sorrow and silence as one seal
On the shut lips of foolishness and love?

Queen. I bade you not be wise; or if I bade,
It was to be obeyed not.

Bothwell. Then indeed
I did obey not, who did foolishly
To do your bidding.

Queen. Mine? did I say, go?
Did I say, love her? did I say, hate me?
As you must hate to love her. Yea, perchance
I said all this; I know not if I said;
But all this have you done; I know that well.

Bothwell. Indeed I have done all this if aught I have,

And loved at all or loathed, save what mine eye
Hath ever loathed or loved since first it saw
That face which taught it faith and made it first
Think scorn to turn and look on change, or see
How hateful in my love's sight are their eyes
That give love's light to others.

Queen. Tell her so,
Not me ; I care not though you love your wife
So well that all strange women's eyes and mine
Are hateful to you. O, what heart have I,
That jest and wrangle? but indeed I thought
You should do well to love her not, but wed,
And make you strong and get us friends—but, nay,
God knows I know not what I thought, or why,
When you should wed her : now I think but this,
That if one love not she does well to die,
And if one love she does not well to live.
I pray you, go ; not for my love who pray,
But that for love's sake we thought well to part,
And if we loved not it was well indeed.
Go.

Bothwell. To what end? and whither? whence-soe'er,
I must come back.

Queen. Not to my feet, not mine ;
Where should his end be for a married man
To lie down lightly with all care cast off
And sleep more sound than in love's lap? for sleep
Between the two fair fiery breasts of love
Will rest his head not oft, nor oft shut eyes,

They say, that love's have looked on.
Bothwell. By that law
Mine eyes must wake for ever.
Queen. Nay, for shame,
Let not the fire in them that feeds on mine
Strike fire upon my cheeks; turn off their heat,
It takes my breath like flame and smothers me.
What, when I bid?
Bothwell. You have bid me do before
What you have chid me doing, but never yet
A thing so past all nature hard, nor now
Shall chide me for obedience.
Queen. Well—ah me!—
I lack the heart to chide; I have borne too much
And haply too much loved. Alas, and now
I am fain too much to show it; but he that made
Made me no liar, nor gave me craft with power
To choose what I might hide at will or show.
I am simple-souled and sudden in my speech,
Too swift and hot of heart to guard my lips
Or else lie lightly: wherefore while I may,
Till my time come to speak of hate or love,
I will be dumb, patient as pity's self
Gazing from Godward down on things of the earth
And dumb till the time be: would I were God,
Time should be quicker to lend help and hand
To men that wait on him. I will not wait,
Lest I wait over long, no more than need,
By my long love I will not. Were I a man,
I had been by this a free man.

Bothwell. Be content.
If I have any wit of soldiership,
'Tis not far off from this to the iron day
That sets on the edge of battle, the bare blow,
All that we fight or fret for. 'Tis not like
Men will bear long with their own lingering hopes
And hearts immitigable and fiery fears
That burn above dead ashes of things quenched
Hotter for danger, and light men forth to fight,
And from between the breaking ranks of war
The flower must grow of all their fears and hopes,
Hopes of high promise, fears made quick by faith,
Angers, ambitions; which to gather and wear
Must be our toil and garland.

Queen. My heart's lord,
I put my heart and hands into your hand
To hold and help; do you what thing in the world
Shall seem well to you with them, they content
Live with your love or die. For my one part,
I would I had done with need of forging words
That I might keep truth pure upon my lips.
I am weary of lying, and would not speak word more
To mock my heart with and win faith from men
But for the truth's sake of my love, which lies
To save the true life in me.

Bothwell. It may be
You shall not long need to dress love in lies;
This plighted plague of yours hath few men friends
To put their bodies between death and his.

Queen. Nay, I think not; and we shall shape us friends

Out of the stuff of their close enmities
Wherewith he walks enwoven and wound about
To the edge and end of peril; yet God knows
If I for all my cause would seek his death,
Whose lips have stained me with report as foul
As seem to mine their kisses that like brands
Sear my shamed face with fire to think on them;
Yet would I rather let him live, would God
Without mine honour or my conscience hurt
Divide from mine his star or bid it set
And on my life lift up that light in heaven
That is my day of the heart, my sun of soul,
To shine till night shut up those loving eyes
That death could turn not from it though the fire
Were quenched at heart that fed them. Nay, no more:
Let me go hence and weep not. [*Exit.*

Bothwell. Fire, in faith,
Enough to light him down the way of the worm
And leave me warmer. She went suddenly;
Doth she doubt yet? I think by God's light no—
I hold her over fast by body and soul,
Flesh holds not spirit closer. Now what way
To shift him over the edge and end of life
She laughs and talks of, yet keep fast my foot
On the strait verge of smooth-worn stony things
That we stand still or slide on? 'Tis a shoal
Whereon the goodliest galleon of man's hope
That had no burning beacon such as mine
Lit of her love to steer by, could not choose
But run to wreck.

Re-enter MARY BEATON.

Mary Beaton. Pray you, my lord, a word.
If you know aught of any new thing here
You will not be about the court to-night;
If not, of my good will I counsel you,
Make hence in speed and secret, and have hope
Till the next day lighten your days to come.

Bothwell. I had rather the close moon and stars anight
Lit me to love-bed: what warm game is here
That I must keep mine hand out?

Mary Beaton. Such a game
As you shall win and play not, or my wit
Is fallen in sickness from me. Sir, you know
I am your friend, I have your hap at heart,
Glad of your good and in your crosses crossed;
I pray you trust me, and be close and wise,
For love of your own luck.

Bothwell. Tell me one thing;
What hand herein shall Master David hold?

Mary Beaton. I think he will not hold the like alive. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—THE HIGH STREET.

CITIZENS *and* PEOPLE.

First Citizen. Was it not shown long since when she came in
If God were glad of her? Two days and nights
Ere she brought strife among us, and again

Two nights and days when first we saw her face,
We saw not once by day the sun's in heaven,
The moon's by night, or any space of stars,
But thick sick mist corrupting the moist air
With drench of darkness, so that scarce at noon
Might man spy man a bow-shot's length away;
And in man's memory on that day of the year
Was never a more dolorous face of heaven
Seen so to scowl on summer, as to speak
What comfort should come with her to this land;
But then were most eyes blind.

Second Citizen. These five years since
Has God filled full of signs that they might see,
And sent his plagues to open them; and most
This year or twain what portents of his hand
Have writ us down in heaven and trembling earth
For fearful flatterers and for faithless friends
Whose fear and friendship have no part in him,
Who knows not or can read not? famine, frost,
Storms of stars crossing, and strange fires in the air,
Have these no tongues to chide with?

Third Citizen. Why, at first
A man that was no seer might see what end
Should come on us that saw the mass come in
And held our hand when man by man fell off
And heart by heart was cooled of all its heat
By sprinkled holy-water of the court
In five days' space, tempering the fervent edge
That had been fieriest on God's side; Lord James,
Whose heart should weep now for it, or burn again

With shame to think how he made strong their hands
Who have cast him out among the banished lords
That lack their life in England, kept himself
The chapel-door, that none who loved God's law
Might slay the idolatrous and whorish priest
In his mid sin; and after mass was said
Lord Robert and Lord John of Coldingham,
Who then had put not off our cause, but sat
With faithful men as fellows at God's board,
Conveyed him to his chamber: there began
The curse that yet constrains us, and must fall
On more than these; of whom ye know this John
Is now before the face o' the fire of God,
And ere he died in desperate penitence,
Men say, sent warning to his sister queen
To turn her feet from those unquiet ways
Wherein they tread behind the Pope's to hell.

First Citizen. His life was like his brother's of St. Cross,
As foul as need or friar's or abbot's be
That had no shameful part in a king's race,
And made such end as he that lives may make,
Whose bastard blood is proud yet, and insults
As might a prince's or a priest's indeed,
Being truly neither, yet with either name
Signed as in scorn; these are our lords, whose lust
Breaks down men's doors to fetch their daughters forth,
Even as his townsmen vexed the doors of Lot
Till God sent on them fire, who spares but these

For our shame's sake, because we spare, being men,
And let our hands hang swordless, and the wrath
Faint in our hearts, that though God send none down
Should be made fire to make a fire of them.

Third Citizen. These fools and foul that with them draw the king
To shame and riotous insolence which turns
Past hope and love to loathing—these, though vile,
Have in them less of poison than men's tongues
Who for the queen's love boast in what brief while
They will pluck down God and plant Antichrist,
And pull out Knox by the ears: thus Bothwell did,
And yet stands higher than any head save his
Who in disdain of danger fills his hands
As full of gold as are his faithless lips
Of lies and bloody counsels, and requires
No less than part in all their forfeit lands
That live in exile, so to turn his name
From loon to lord, from stranger into Scot,
And next the Pope's exalt it: while this king
Sets all his heart to fleshly foolishness,
The beastlike body that eats up the soul
As a bird snared and eaten: and in fear
Of God and Rimmon, with a supple soul,
Crooks his lithe knee for craft and bows his back
In either's house, yet seeks no prophet's leave,
Nor hears his saying that God shall spew the like
Out of his mouth.

Second Citizen. Yet this good grows in him,

That he has fallen in anger with the queen
For her knave's sake that was his closest friend,
Chief craftsman and main builder of the match;
Yea, half his heart, brother and bedfellow,
Sworn secret on his side.

Third Citizen. There are who think
They have changed beds in very and shameful deed,
And halved more than their own hearts.

First Citizen. He came here
On the Pope's party, against our kindly lords,
Against the duke, our first more natural head,
Against the good will of all godliness;
And hath he now cast their cords from him? nay,
This is the stormy sickness of ill blood
Swelling the veins of sin in violent youth
That makes them wrangle, but at home and heart,
Whatever strife there seem of hands abroad,
They are single-minded in the hate of God.
Did he not break forth into bitterness,
Being warned by Knox of youth and empty heart,
Yea, rail aloud as one made mad with wine?
Did he not lay devices with this knave
That now ye say defiles him in his wife
To rid the noble Murray from their way
That they might ride with hotter spurs for hell?

Second Citizen. God hath set strife betwixt them that their feet
Should not be long time out of their own snares.
Here be the men we look for comfort from,

Men that have God's mark sharp upon the soul;
Stout Ochiltree, and our main stay John Knox.

Enter JOHN KNOX *and* OCHILTREE.

Ochiltree. Have you yet hope that for his people's sake
God will leave off to harden her hard heart,
That you will yet plead with her?

John Knox. Nay, I know not;
But what I may by word or witness borne,
That will I do, being bidden: yet indeed
I think not to bring down her height of mind
By counsel or admonishment. Her soul
Is as a flame of fire, insatiable,
And subtle as thin water; with her craft
Is passion mingled so inseparably
That each gets strength from other, her swift wit
By passion being enkindled and made hot,
And by her wit her keen and passionate heart
So tempered that it burn itself not out,
Consuming to no end. Never, I think,
Hath God brought up against the people of God
To try their force or feebleness of faith
A foe than this more dangerous, nor of mood
More resolute against him.

Ochiltree. So long since
You prophesied of her when new come in:
What then avails it that you counsel her
To be not this born danger that she is,

But friends with God she hates and with his folk
She would root out and ruin?

John Knox. Yet this time
I am not bidden of him to cast her off;
I will speak once; for here even in our eyes
His enemies grow great and cast off shame.
We are haled up out of hell to heaven, and now
They would fain pluck us backward by the skirt.
And these men call me bitter-tongued and hard
Who am not bitter; but their work and they
Who gather garlands from the red pit-side
To make foul fragrance in adulterous hair,
And lift white hands to hide the fires of God,
Their sweetness and their whiteness shall he turn
Bitter and black. I have no hate of her,
That I should spare; I will not spare to strive
That the strong God may spare her, and not man.

Ochiltree. Yea, both, so be we have our lost lords home,
And the Pope's back-bowed changeling clean cast out
And of a knave made carrion.

John Knox. For your first,
It grows as fruit out of your second wish;
Come but the day that looks in his dead face,
And these that hate him as he hates all good
Shall have their friends home and their honour high
Which the continuance of his life keeps low.

Ochiltree. Surely, for that, my hand or any's else
Were hot enough to help him to his end.

Yet when this thing is through and this plague purged
There stands a thorn yet in our way to prick—
The loose weak-witted half-souled boy called king.

John Knox. It is of him I am bidden speak with her,
Having but now rebuked him backsliding
In God's sight and his name. It may be yet,
Whether by foolishness and envious heart
Or by some nobler touch left in his blood,
Some pulse of spirit that beats to a tune more high
Than base men set their hearts by, he will turn
Helpful to Godward, serviceable in soul
To good men's ends in hate of that they hate :
I cannot say; howbeit I fear not much
Her love of him will keep him fast to her;
If he be drawn in bonds after her wheels,
It will be but of subtle soul and craft
The cords are woven that hold him. But, for me,
Love they or hate, my way is clear with them;
Not for her sake nor his sake shall our Lord
Change counsel and turn backward; and save his
What will or wit I have to speak or live
He knows who made it little for myself,
But for him great; and be you well assured
Love of their love nor doubt of their dislike
Hath upon me more power than upon God.
For now I have seen him strive these divers years
With spirits of men and minds exorbitant,
Souls made as iron and their face as flame
Full hard and hot against him, and their wits
Most serpent-strong and swift, sudden of thought

And overflowing of counsel, and their hands
Full of their fortune, and their hearts made large
To hold increase of all prosperities;
And all these are not, and I poor man am,
Because he hath taken and set me on his side
And not where these were; I am content alone
To keep mine own heart in his secret sight
Naked and clean, well knowing that no man born
Shall do me scathe but he hath bidden him do,
Nor I speak word but as he hath set it me.

First Citizen. Goes he to Holyrood?

Second Citizen. Ay, sir, by noon.

First Citizen. There is a kindling trouble in the air;
The sun is halting toward the top of day;
It will be shine or rain before he come.

Ochiltree. What ails this folk to hover at our heel
And hang their eyes on you so heedfully?

John Knox. They should be naturally disquieted
Seeing what new wind makes white the wave o' the time
We ride on out of harbour. Sirs, ye have heard
News of your scathe and of shame done to God,
And the displeasure bites you by the heart,
I doubt not, if your hearts be godly given;
Make your souls strong in patience; let your wrath
Be rather as iron than as fuel in fire,
Tempered and not consumed; heat that burns out
Leaves the hearth chillier for the flameless ash
Than ere the wood was kindled.

First Citizen. Master Knox,
You know us whereto we would and by what way;

This too much patience burns our cheeks with shame
That our hands are not redder than our face
With slaying of manslayers who spill blood of faith
And pierce the heart of naked holiness;
It is far gone in rumour how the queen
Will set on high and feed on gold that man
Who was a scourge laid long since on the saints,
The archbishop of St. Andrew's, and perforce,
Dyed as he stands in grain with innocent blood,
Will make him mightier for our scathe and shame
Than ere the kindly people of the word
Had made him bare of bad authority.

Second Citizen. Likewise she hath given her seal imperial
To a lewd man and a stranger, her own knave,
Vile, and a papist; that with harp and song
Makes her way smoother toward the pit of hell.

John Knox. What needs us count and cast offences up
That all we know of, how all these have one head,
The hateful head of unstanched misbelief?
For sins are sin-begotten, and their seed
Bred of itself and singly procreative;
Nor is God served with setting this to this
For evil evidence of several shame,
That one may say, Lo now, so many are they;
But if one seeing with God-illumined eyes
In his full face the encountering face of sin
Smite once the one high-fronted head and slay,
His will we call good service. For myself,

If ye will make a counsellor of me,
I bid you set your hearts against one thing
To burn it up, and keep your hearts on fire,
Not seeking here a sign and there a sign,
Nor curious of all casual sufferances,
But steadfast to the undoing of that thing done
Whereof ye know the being, however it be,
And all the doing abominable of God.
Who questions with a snake if the snake sting?
Who reasons of the lightning if it burn?
While these things are, deadly will these things be;
And so the curse that comes of cursed faith.

First Citizen. It is well said.

Second Citizen. Ay, and well done were well.

Third Citizen. We have borne too long for God,
we that are men,
Who hath time to bear with evil if he would,
Having for life's length even eternity;
But we that have but half our life to live,
Whose half of days is swallowed of their nights,
We take on us this lame long-suffering,
To sit more still and patienter than God,
As though we had space to doubt in, and long time
For temperate, quiet, and questionable pause.

First Citizen. Let the time come—

Second Citizen. Nay, we must make the time,
Bid the day bring forth to us the fruit we would,
Or else fare fruitless forth.

Third Citizen. It is nigh noon;
There will be shine and rain and shine ere night.

SCENE III.—HOLYROOD.

The QUEEN *and* RIZZIO ; MARY SEYTON *and* MARY CARMICHAEL *in attendance.*

Queen. Is he so tender-tongued? it is his fear
That plucks the fang out from his hate, and makes
A stingless snake of his malignant heart;
He hath a mind, or had he a mind at all,
Would have a mind to mischief; but his will
Is a dumb devil.

Rizzio. Why, fear then and no love
Will make faith in him out of falsehood's self,
And keep him constant through unstableness.

Queen. Fear that makes faith may break faith ; and a fool
Is but in folly stable. I cannot tell
If he indeed fear these men more than me;
Or if he slip their collar, whether or no
He will be firm on my side, as you say,
Through very lightness ; but I think not of him,
Steadfast or slippery. Would I had been that day
Handless, when I made one his hand with mine!
Yet it seemed best. I am spirit-sick and faint
With shame of his foul follies and loathed life,
Which hath no part but lewdness of a man,
Nor style of soul nor several quality,
Dividing men from men, and man from beast,
By working heart or complement of brain—
None, very none. I will not see him to-night.

I have given command to ensure our privacy.
Is it past noon?

Enter DARNLEY *and* MARY BEATON.

Darnley. You say she hath asked for me?

Mary Beaton. Ay, and complainingly, as though her love
Were struck at by your absence.

Darnley. Love! her love!
It were a cunning stroke should print a wound
In that which hath no substance, and no spirit
To feel the hurt. Well, I will speak to her.

Queen. How like a chidden bondman of his lord
Looks my lord now! Come you from penance, sir?
Has the kirk put you to no private shame
Besides the public tongue of broad rebuke?
We are blessed in your penitence; it is
A gracious promise for you.

Darnley. Penitence?

Queen. You have a tender faith and quick remorse
That will bear buffets easily; pray God
It pluck you absolution from their hands
Who are godly sparing of it. We have heard
A priest of theirs cast for incontinence
Hardly with thrice purgation of his shame
Redeemed himself to kirkward.

Darnley. I hear nought.

Queen. Nay, but you hear when these rebuke you of sin
In the full face and popular ear of men;

You hear them surely, and patiently you hear,
And it shows in you godliness and grace
Praiseworthy from them ; for myself, my lord,
I have some foolish petulances in me
And stings of pride that shut me out from grace
So sought and bought of such men ; but your course
May teach me timelier humble-mindedness
And patience to get favour : which till now
I have never needed beg, and now should prove
A very witless beggar. Teach me words,
Pray you, to move men's minds with ; such great men's
As your submission purchases to be
Good friends and patrons to you ; for I fear
Your Knox is not my friend yet.

Darnley. So I think.
Madam, I know not what you make of me,
Nor if your jest be seasonable or no ;
I am no fool nor implement of theirs,
Nor patienter of their irreverences
Than the queen's self ; if you endure such tongues,
Why, I may bear them.

Queen. Well and patiently ;
I praise your manhood's temper for it, and am
The happier for your royalty of spirit
That will not feel wrong done of baser men
To be at all wrong done you.

Darnley. Will you think it?
Well then, I am so, I am just your thought,
You read me right, and this our friend reads too,
For I am plain and easy to read right.

Queen. Have you made time to say so?
Darnley. Ay, and this,
That it mislikes me—it gives me discontent
That men should——
Queen. Ay? that men should—anything—
Bear themselves manlike, or that men should be,
It is offence done openly to you?
Darnley. Nay, not offence, nor open; nought it is,
Or to me nought.
Queen. Nought as I think indeed.
You were about to chide us? well it is
You have so humble a wife of us and true,
To make your chidings fruitful, that your words
Bear and bring forth good seed of bettering change.
I pray you, when you chide me, that you make
Your stripes the gentler for my humbleness.
Darnley. I have no mind to jest and jape, and will—
And will not wrangle with you.
Queen. Will, and will not?
They say a woman's will is made like that,
But your will yet is wilfuller than ours.
Darnley. Not as I think.
Queen. God better the king's thought,
And mind more tyrannous than is his place!
Darnley. If I be king——
Queen. And I be kingdomless,
And place be no place, and distinction die
Between the crown and curch— Well, on, our lord.
Darnley. Why am I out of counsel with you?
Whence

Am I made show of for a titular fool
And have no hand in enterprise of yours,
Nor tongue, nor presence? Not alone my name
That is rubbed out and grated off your gold,
But myself plucked out of your register,
Made light account of, held as nothingness,
Might move me——

Queen. Whither?

Darnley. To some show of wrath
More than complaint, if I were minded ill.
Here is a breach made with the English queen,
Our cousin of England, a wide-open breach,
A great-grown quarrel, and I no part of it,
Not named or known of.

Queen. You are the happier man
Heavenward, if blessed be the peaceable.

Darnley. The happier heavenward, being the worldlier shamed;
The less I like it. You have suddenly cast forth
A man her servant and ambassador,
With graceless haste and instance, from the realm,
On barren charge of bare complicity
With men now banished and in English bounds,
But not attaint of treason toward us yet
Nor deadly doomed of justice.

Queen. Not attaint?
Give not your spirit trouble for that; the act
Is drawn by this against them, and the estates
Need but give warrant to their forfeiture
Now it has passed the lords of the articles;

Take no care for it; though it be sweet in you
And gracious, to show care of your worst foes
You have on earth; that would have driven you forth
A shameful rebel to your cousin queen
And naked of our foreign favour here
That clothed you with unnatural royalty
And not your proper purple. Forth; you say
I have done this wrong?

Darnley. I do not say you have done
Wise work nor unwise; but howbeit, I say
I had no part in aught of it, nor knew
With what a spur's prick you provoked her spleen
Who is not stingless to requite it you,
Nor with what scant of reason.

Queen. 'Tis sad truth,
She shows no less disquiet mind than yours
Nor a less loud displeasure; she was kind,
She says, well-willed to meward, but my sins,
Unkindliness, and soul's obduracy,
Have made her soft heart hard; and for this fault
She will not ever counsel me again,
Nor cease to comfort my dear brother's need
With gold and good compassion: and I have
Even such a sister as brother of her as him,
And love alike and am like loved of them.
He wills me well, she swears, as she herself,
And, I'll re-swear it, she wills as well as he.

Darnley. Ay, we know whence this well-spring of your will
Takes head and current; who must have brave wars

We know, fair field, broad booty to sweep up,
Space to win spurs in; and what English gold
Must after battle gild his heels with them,
When he shall stand up in my father's stead
Lieutenant-general for you of the realm:
And who must have your brother's lands we know,
Investiture must have, and chancellorship,
And masterdom in council. Here he stands,
A worthy witness to it; do you look on me?
Is it not you must be the golden sir,
The counsel-keeper, the sole tongue of the head,
The general man, the goodly? Did you send
Lord Bothwell hard at heel of him cast forth
To make his wrong sweet with sweet-spoken words,
And temper the sharp taste of outrage done
And heat in him of anger, with false breath?
Why made you not your own tongue tunable
Who are native to soft speaking, and who hate
With as good heart as any Scot that hates
England? or is her messenger your fool
To take blows from you and good words alike
As it shall chance him cross your morning mood
Angry or kindly?

Queen. Sir, our chancellor,
We charge you that you answer not the duke.

Darnley. Duke?

Queen. Ay, the duke of Rothsay; whom we pray
Seek otherwhere some seemlier talking-stock
To flush his hot and feverish wit upon.

Darnley. Your chancellor? why went not such
a man
With you before the lords of the articles
Now, an hour back, and yet but half day through,
To help you speak the banished lords to death?
Is't not the heart of the office, to see law
Punish law's traitors, as you bid them be
In the proof's teeth, who are honester than some
You bid be law's justiciaries of them?
Why went he not? 'twere no more shame nor praise
Than here to swell in state beside your own.

Queen. Must we crave leave to bid you twice take
leave,
Or twice to ask what would you?

Darnley. Truly this,
A mere mean thing, an insignificance,
If you will once more hear—oh, nowise me,
But just the man whose name you take in mouth
To smite me on my face with—Master Knox.

Queen. Are you his usher going before his grace
No less than servant to his master-word?
Or is it penitence and submission makes you
In the holy way of honour and recompense
So high in office with him? Say, this time
For the usher's sake I'll speak with the usher's lord:
Yet if I mind 'twas I bade send for him
To speak of you his servant: for I hear
You did not at first stripe submit yourself
Nor take all penance with all patience, being

Brought hardly in time to harsh humility
Such as we see now ; which thing craves excuse
To make you gracious in your master's eyes,
If it be true—I would not think it were—
You brake in anger forth from the High Kirk,
Being there rebuked, and would not sit at meat,
But past away to hawking in pure rage
After an hour or twain of high discourse
Heard with plain show of sharp unthankfulness ;
Which that you now repent and would redeem
I will bear witness for you to your lord
To make your penitential peace with him.
Let him come in.

Darnley. I am no messenger.

Queen. Where is my chamberlain? bid Marnock here—
Let the man in and one man only more,
Whoever it be ; we'll see him privily.
Our chancellor, and our no messenger,
We have no need of to dispute with him.

Darnley. If I go hence——

Queen. Why then you stay not here.

Darnley. But if I go at bidding——

Queen. Why, you go :
With the more speed, the less of tarriance made.
Let me not hold you half-way back : farewell.

[*Exeunt* DARNLEY *and* RIZZIO.

I have not begun so luckily, nor set
So good a face on the first half of day,
Now to keep terms with mere tongue-traitors more.

Enter JOHN KNOX *and* JOHN ERSKINE OF DUN.

So once we are met again, sir, you and I.
Set him before us.

John Knox. I am before your grace
Without man's haling or compulsive word:
Nor at these divers times you have sent for me
Have you found need to use me forcefully.

Queen. Well, let that be; as verily meseems
'Tis I find forceful usage at your hands,
And handling such as never prince has borne
Since first kings were; yet have I borne with it,
Who am your natural princess, and sat by
To hear your rigorous manner of speaking through
As loud against my kinsfolk as myself;
Yea, I have sought your favour diligently
And friendship of my natural subject born
And reconcilement by all possible means;
I have offered you at your own choice and time
Whenso it pleased you ever admonish me
Presence and audience; yea, have shamed myself
With reasonless submission; have endured
The naked edge of your sharp speech, and yet
Cannot be quit of you: but here to God
I make my vow I will be once revenged.
Give me my handkerchief. I should take shame
That he can shame me with these tears, to make
Mine eyes his vassals.

John Knox. Madam, true it is
There have been divers seasons of dispute

Between your grace and me, wherein I have never
Found you offended: neither now would find
The offence I sought not; yea, I knew this well,
If it shall please God break your prison-house
And lighten on your disimprisoned soul,
That my tongue's freedom shall offend you not.
For surely being outside the preaching-place
I think myself no breeder of offence
Nor one that gives man cause of wrath and wrong;
And being therein, I speak not of myself
But as God bids who bids me, speaking plain,
Flatter no flesh on earth. Lo, here I stand,
A single soul and naked in his eye,
Constrained of him, to do what thing he will,
And dare and can none other. Hath he sent me
To speak soft words of acceptable things
In ladies' chambers or kings' courts, to make
Their ways seem gracious to them? I wot, no.
I am to bring God's gospel in men's ears,
And faith therein, and penitence, which are
The twain parts of it; but the chief o' the land
And all the main of your nobility
Give God no heed nor them that speak for God
Through flattering fear and ill respect of you;
And seeing if one preach penitence to men
He must needs note the sin he bids repent,
How should not I note these men's sin who choose
To serve affections in you and wild will
Rather than truth in God? This were lost breath,
To chide the general wrong-doing of the world

And not the very present sin that burns
Here in our eyes offensive; bid serve God,
And say not with what service.

Queen. Nay, but so
What is it to you or any saving me
How this man married to me bears himself?
With what sign-manual has God warranted
Your inquisition of us? What am I
That my most secret sanctuaries of life
And private passages of hours should be
Food for men's eyes or pavement for men's feet
To peer and pasture, track and tread upon,
Insult with instance? Am I only bound
To let the common mouth communicate
In my life's sweet or bitter sacrament,
The wine poured, the bread broken every day?
To walk before men bare that they may judge
If I were born with any spot or no,
And praise my naked nature? to subject
Mine unsubmitted soul subordinate
To popular sight and sentence? What am I
That I should be alone debarred, deposed,
From the poor right of poor men, who may live
Some hour or twain unchallenged of the day
And make to no man answer what they do
As I to mine must render? who is this
That takes in hand such hard things and such high?
Sir, what man are you that I need account
For this word said or that, or such things done,
Only to you or mainly, of myself?

Yea, what are you within this commonwealth?

John Knox. A man within it and a subject born,
Madam; and howsoever no great man,
Earl, lord, nor baron to bear rule therein,
Yet has God made me a profitable man,
How abject I seem ever in your eye,
No member of the same unmeritable.
Yea, madam, this pertains not less to me
Than any of all your noble-nurtured men,
To warn men of what things may hurt the same,
So as I see them dangerous: and herein
My conscience and mine office with one tongue
Crave plainness of me: wherefore to yourself
I say the thing I speak in public place,
That what great men soever at any time
Shall be consenting to your lord's unfaith
Or flattering furtherance of unfaith in you,
They do what in them lieth to cast out Christ,
Banish his truth, betray his liberty
And free right of this realm, and in the end
Shall haply do small comfort to yourself.
And for him too, your husband, it may be
That as he spares not to dishonour God
For your delight, by service of the mass,
God will not spare to smite him by your hand
That faithlessly he fawns on to his loss.

Queen. When was there queen so handled in the world?
I would I could not weep; for being thus used
I needs must never or now. Is this light day?

Am I asleep, or mad, or in a trance,
That have such words to beat about mine ears
And in mine eyes his present face who speaks?

Erskine of Dun. Madam, I pray your grace contain your mood,
And keep your noble temperance of yourself,
For your high sake and honour, who are held
For excellence of spirit and natural soul
As sovereign born as for your face and place,
Kingdom and kingly beauty; to whose might
The worthiest of the world, all Europe's chief,
Her choice of crowns, might gladly bow themselves
To find your favour. I beseech you think
That here is no disloyalty designed
Nor thing dishonourable; for were men mad
Whose wits are whole, and false whose faiths are sound,
The very mouth of madness would speak sense,
The very tongue of treason would speak truth,
For love and service of your royalty;
Blind curses bless, and red rebellion bow,
That came to burn and threaten. Do not dream
That a man faithful Godward and well loved
Can be to youward evil-willed, who have
Power on your natural and your born unfriends
To bind their goodwill to you.

Queen. Words, all words;
I am weary of words: I have heard words enough
To build and break, if breath could break or build,
Centuries of men. What would they with me, sir?
These my liege folk that love me to the death,

Their death or mine, no matter—my fast friends
Whose comfortable balms so bruise my head
It cannot hold the crown up—these good hands
That wring my wrist round to wrench out the staff
God set into mine own—these loving lips
That take my name upon them as to kiss
And leave it rank with foam of hateful speech?
Must I be dead deposed, or must I live
Stript shameless, naked to the very name,
A crestless creature and displumed, that feeds
On charities and chances? will they give
Me, their queen born, me, bread or dust to eat,
With a mouth water-moistened or a dry,
Beggared or buried? shall I hold my head
In shameful fief and tenantry of these
For their least wind of any wrath that blows
To storm it off my shoulders? What were I
That being so born should be born such a thing
As bondsmen might bemock the bondage of
And slaves contemn for slavery? Nay, no words:
A word may wound and no word heal again,
As none can me—whom all men's words may wound—
Who am liable to all buffets of men's tongues,
All stripes of all their scandals—and was born
To no such fear—and have nor tongue nor wit
To plead and gather favour—no such grace
As may get grace, no piteous skilfulness—
Only my truth and tears—and would to God
My tears and truth for you were wind and fire
To burn and blow corruption from the world,

And leave pure peace to breed where you plant war
And make the furrows fat with pestilence
And the grain swell with treason—but, too sure,
They too can hurt and heal not. I am soul-sick
With shame and bitter weakness ; yet, God's will,
I may take strength about me to put off
Some part of shame. Sir, you that make me weep,
By these my tears and my sharp shame of them
I swear you will not laugh to see me laugh,
When my time comes : you shall not ; I will have
Time to my friend yet—I shall see you, sir,
If you can weep or no, that with dry eyes
Have seen mine wet—I will try that—look to it.

John Knox. Madam, I speak in very eye of God,
I never took delight in any tears
Shed of God's creatures ; yea, for my self-sake,
I can but very hardly abide the tears
Of mine own boys whom mine own hand and love
Chastens, and much less can take any joy
In this the weeping of your majesty.
But seeing I have given you no offensive cause
Nor just occasion, but have spoken truth
After mine office as mine own place craves
Lest I, God's man, be mansworn to God's truth,
I must sustain, howbeit unwillingly,
Rather these tears drawn of your majesty
Than blood of mine own conscience stabbed to death
Or through my silence of my commonwealth
By my dumb treason wounded.

Queen. A fair word—

I thought it was forgotten of men's mouths
And only lived in the inner heat of the heart
Too sure to want the spelling of their speech.
Sir, you shall find it in my very tears,
This blood you fear for of your commonwealth,
And in the hurts of mine authority
The wounds it lies abed with; what, God help,
Can the head bleed and not the body faint?
Or wherein should the kingdom feel such maim
As in the kingship stricken? there are you,
If you be true man, and each true man born
Subject and circled with the bound of rule,
Hurt to the heart. But heartless things are words;
Henceforth I will not mix my speech with yours
In the way of disputation ever more,
Nor set against your tongue the plea of mine
To reason as its equal. Wait you here,
Here in the chamber: you, sir, come with me
To counsel in my cabinet somewhile;
We will return his answer.

[*Exeunt* QUEEN *and* ERSKINE OF DUN.

Mary Carmichael. She wept sore;
I never saw her spirit, so chafed, so melt
And thaw to such mere passion; this one time
He is sure attainted.

Mary Beaton. Ay, she fain would dare
Upon the spur of the hour attaint him; yet
What none dare else she durst not; they will put
Force of fair words as bridle in the mouth
Of her wild will and reinless.

Mary Seyton. She is wise,
And fights not wisdom, but being counselled well
Takes truce with time and tongueless policy.
What, will the man speak to us? he looks so hard
With such fast eyes and sad—I had not thought
His face so great, nor presence.

John Knox. Ah, fair ladies,
How fair were this your life and pleasurable
If this might ever abide, and so in the end
With all this gay gear we might pass to heaven:
But fie upon that knave, Death, that will come
Whether we will or will not: and being come,
When he has laid on his assured arrest,
The foul worms will be busy with this flesh,
Be it never so fair and tender; and the soul,
The silly soul shall be so feeble, I fear,
It can bear with it neither gold nor pearl,
Painting of face, garnish, nor precious stones.

Mary Beaton. Sir, for myself, small joy this were to me
That this life should live ever: nor would I
Care much by praying to stretch my days of life
Into more length, nor much to take with me
Garnish or gold; but one thing I would fain
Have to go gravewards with me and keep it safe,
That you have cast no word or warning on,
And yet women, whose hearts are worldly worn
And by no creed of yours consolable
Nor gladness of your gospel, love its name
As dear as God's; and its name is but rest.

John Knox. Rest has no other name but only
God's.
Mary Beaton. But God has many another name
than rest:
His name is life, and life's is weariness.
John Knox. Ay, but not his; that life has lost his
name;
Peace is his name, and justice.
Mary Beaton. Ah, sir, see,
Can these two names be one name? or on earth
Can two keep house together that have name
Justice and peace? where is that man i' the world
Who hath found peace in the arms of justice lain
Or justice at the breast of peace asleep?
Is not God's justice painted like as ours,
A strong man armed, a swordsman red as fire,
Whose hands are hard, and his feet washed in blood?
It were an iron peace should sleep with him,
And rest were unrest that should kiss his lips.
What man would look on justice here and live,
Peace has no more part in him.
John Knox. Lady, nay,
That only peace indeed which is of God
Hath in the just man not a part but all,
But the whole righteous life and heart in him
Still peacefully possesses; who hath not
Or loves not justice, he can love not peace,
For peace is just; and that thing is not peace
That such men love, but full of strife and lies,
A thing of thorns and treasons. This were even

As if a man loving a harlot should
Praise her for maiden and himself for pure
To love such maidenhood, when any says
That he loves peace who loves not holiness,
For peace is holy. Yea, and if one seek
He shall find peace where bitterest justice is,
In the full fire and middle might of wrath,
Rather than where sloth sucks the lips of shame
Or fear with her foul brother unbelief
Lives in adultery ; strife is that which springs,
As a winged worm and poisonous, of their sheets ;
And in the slumberless and storm-strewn bed
That very war's self spreads for righteousness
Peace as a babe is born.

Mary Beaton. Would God it were,
For 'tis a bitter childbed : these long years
We look for fruit and none comes forth of it,
But yet more iron travail ; and ourselves,
Desiring justice, quite lose hold of peace,
And are distracted with our own fierce want
And hungry need of right unreachable.
Yet it may come, and then shall peace indeed.

John Knox. You talk against your habit.

Re-enter ERSKINE OF DUN.

Erskine of Dun. Master Knox,
The queen will no more hear you at this time,
But with good will and gracious mind will weigh
Your worth and worthy meaning in your words.

John Knox. It may be she will never hear me more.
Farewell, fair ladies ; may God look on you,
And give you chiefly comfort, which is grace.
[*Exeunt* JOHN KNOX *and* ERSKINE OF DUN.

Mary Seyton. Why did you prate so preacher-like with him?

Mary Beaton. I cannot tell by asking of myself
Nor answer for your asking. Which of you
Shall wait at supper on the queen to night?

Mary Carmichael. None but her counsel of close hours, Argyle.

Mary Beaton. She sups with them—and in attendance there
Some two or three I heard of—one of these
No man of arms.

Mary Seyton. What should they do with arms?
More need of lips to sing with.

Mary Beaton. Ay, to sing—
It is no matter of state they meet upon?

Mary Seyton. Are your wits lost indeed, or do you jest?

Mary Beaton. True, it should be for no affairs of state
They sup at nightfall in the lesser room—
They three, and three to make the music up.

Mary Seyton. What ails you at it?

Mary Beaton. Nothing ; I ail nought.
I did but think what music he should make
After this preacher. Let us to the queen.

SCENE IV.—DARNLEY'S LODGING.

DARNLEY *and* SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS.

Darnley. I think our friend of Morton had grown slack
But for my spurring, uncle.

Sir George Douglas. Nay, he is firm ;
You do him less right than you do yourself
To think he should need quickening.

Darnley. O, I know not,
What should I know? what wit have I to know?
I am a fool and have no forethought! Why,
But for my resolute instance at this need—
I said to him, be resolute—and since then,
Some six or eight hours gone, I have heard such things
As would put sense and passion in dead bones—
By God I have ; it shall be seen I have.
But are you sure it should be done to-night?

Sir George Douglas. Ay, surely.

Darnley. Well, I see no surety in it—
Methinks now every day we let him live
Blows hot the popular wrath of all the land
And makes us surer when we strike indeed
That all men's hearts will stab him with our hands.

Sir George Douglas. By which account he might live long and die
An old white death and woundless. Is not this
The man whereof you told me some while since
How at close midnight, your wife's doors being locked,

You burst them open, and gat hold of him
Hid in a closet of her bedchamber,
Save for furred gown and shirt about the knave
Naked? and must you take him so again
And he so twice get clear of you and laugh?
You swore me that—what need to tell or swear,
If he must live still? weeping, with clenched hands,
You swore it, praying me for our shame's sake send
Word to your uncle Ruthven; but what need,
If there were no shame in the thing at all
Or but so little, as now so little it seems,
There is no haste to slay him?

Darnley. Nay, you carp—
'Tis thus men ever catch at my good words
To turn them on their tongues and spit them out
Changed and discoloured. He shall die to-night.

Sir George Douglas. Assuredly.

Darnley. I say so—mark, I say it,
I that have cause—how else could it be sure?
But sure it is—I say he shall not live.
Let us go seek Lord Morton out again
And tell him it is sworn we strike to-night.
How many of us have hands in it with me,
Who cannot with mine own hand as I would
Strike—it were shameful to me—were it not?
For mine own hand's sake.

Sir George Douglas. There are hands enough
Without the shame done to your highness' hand:
Sufficeth us we have it set to the bond
That signs him dead; nor need we sum their names

Whose hands will strike, not spare, for their own sakes.

Darnley. Well, let us go to make my lord's faith sure
That it shall be no later than to-night.

SCENE V.—THE QUEEN'S CABINET.

The QUEEN, RIZZIO, COUNTESS OF ARGYLE, LORD ROBERT STUART, ARTHUR ERSKINE, *in attendance.*

Queen. Have I not done a queenlike work to-day?
I have made attaint my traitors of myself,
With no man at my hand to strengthen me
Have gone before the lords of the articles
And set my will upon them like a seal,
And they for their part set on their old friends
The bloody seal of treason signed of death
And countersigned of burning ignominy.
You were half fearful, you, lord chancellor,
You my good servant; but I knew their necks
Were made to take the impression of my foot,
Their wills and souls the likeness of mine own,
And I have used them for the things they are.

Countess of Argyle. You have been right royal, madam, and your lovers
Have joyful cause to praise you.

Queen. Will you say it,
Who bear as much part in his blood as I
Of our dead father's giving? then I think
No other tongue for love of Murray slain
Shall sting me though mine own speak off his head,

Once caught up out of England; nay, I think
We shall get vantage of your lord's friend Knox
Ere many days be.

Countess of Argyle. Speed your majesty!
The cord were hallowed that should silence him.

Queen. Ay, though mine own hands twist it. To spin hemp
For such a throat, so loud and eloquent,
Should better please me and seem a queenlier thing
Than to weave silk and flower it with fine gold.
He hath a tongue to tame a tiger with,
Fright into fierce and violent reverence
The fearfullest earth's monsters. I do think
I like him better than his creed-fellows
Whose lips are softer toward me; 'tis some sport
To set my wit to his, and match with mine
The shrewd and fiery temper of his spirit
For trial of true mastery; yet to-day
He made me weep, weep mightily—by faith,
If there be faith in any lips of earth,
I think to live and laugh at his tears yet.

Robert Stuart. I would the hand were on him that might make
His eyes weep red and drop out of their rings,
Looking on death. What reason gives him leave,
What right makes room for him to take his way
So past men's patience grown so masterful?
Had I one half word's warrant of your grace
His tongue should not be long inside his lips.

Queen. I am no wife of Antony, to try

My needle's point against his tongue's edge; yet
I have cause as good as Fulvia's, though his speech
Ring somewhat short of Roman. Here is one
That has that southern honey on his lips
Frozen as it seems up with this galling air
And not a note left golden, but his tongue
Nipt with the chill to death as with a knife
That cuts us short of music.

Countess of Argyle. Yea, my lord,
Why will you so discomfort the good hour
With tongueless sadness? we have cause to chide
That having cause to sing find song to seek
And thought to find it ready.

Rizzio. I have been sad
These two hours back; I know not what it was
So struck me out of mirth, for I was merry,
And knew not why.

Queen. Nay, if you love me, sir,
You had reason to be merry with my mirth
Who am blithe to be found queen over my foes;
I have been glad all this good day thereof
Save some few minutes that my subject-saint
Vexed even to mere intemperance; but few tears
Wept out that little bitter part of day
And left it sweet. Have you not heard men say
This heaviness without a root of fear
Goes oft before some good? now should there be
Some new thing hard upon us that will make
All good hearts glad. Have you no song to mock
The doubt away that mocks you?

Rizzio. At your will.
I am something yet in tune for such a song
As joy makes out of sorrow, when the thought
Plays with false grief for joy's sake. Please you hear it
With such light audience as its worth is light?

Queen. Ay, such a note should fit me for this time;
After the tuneless toil of talking day
A light song lightly brings ill thoughts asleep.

(RIZZIO *sings*).

Lord Love went Maying
Where Time was playing,
In light hands weighing
  Light hearts with sad;
Crowned king with peasant,
Pale past with present,
Harsh hours with pleasant,
  Good hopes with bad;
Nor dreamed how fleeter
Than Time's swift metre,
O'er all things sweeter
  How clothed with power,
The murderess maiden
Mistrust walks laden
  With red fruit ruined and dead white
    flower.

How close behind him
Ere man's faith find him,
How strong to bind him
  With fears for bands,
Lest once beholden
Of man the golden
God's face embolden
  All hearts and hands;

For if doubt were not,
Whose sore shafts spare not,
Large life would care not
For death's poor hour,
Seeing all life's season
By love's sweet reason
Made wise would seem in his eyes a flower.

Countess of Argyle. Did you hear that?

Robert Stuart. What?

Queen. Nothing but sweet words.

Countess of Argyle. I heard a cry i' the wind as of one hurt.

Arthur Erskine. There is no wind up, madam.

Queen. Peace, I pray; It was your own sense mocked you. Hear it through; There should be more, and sadder.

Countess of Argyle. Nay, I heard.

RIZZIO (*sings*).

By Love's side flying
As Time went crying
Glad news and lying
In all men's ears,
With blind feet gliding
She came deriding
Their joyous tiding
That ends in tears;
From Time's side failing
As Love sank quailing,
Her strong wings sailing
Made all heads cower,
Her wings untethered,
With fleet thoughts feathered,
Made weak the summer and bleak the flower.

Hope found no cover
Wherein to hover,
And Love no lover,
And Joy no place;
Till when Time creeping
Had left him sleeping,
Love knelt down weeping
Before her face,
And prayed, soul-stricken,
One flower might quicken,
Though spring should sicken
And storm devour;
She from her bosom
Flung one sere blossom,
Then passed him dead on the last dead flower.

Robert Stuart. Hark! some one laughed there.

Queen. What does death i' the song?
Can they not let love live, but must needs make
His grave with singing? 'Tis the trick of song
That finds no way to end else.

Rizzio. An old trick;
Your merrier songs are mournfuller sometimes
Than very tears are.

Queen. Do you hear noises still?

Enter DARNLEY.

Who sent you to us?

Darnley. My love to my sweet lady.
[*Kisses her.*

Queen. What feet are theirs behind you? Who stands there?

Darnley. Nay, nothing, nay, sweet, nothing.
Queen. I should know—
Judas! [*Seeing* RUTHVEN *in the doorway.*
Darnley. I tell you——
Ruthven. Let that man come forth;
He hath been here too long.
Queen. What hath he done?
Ruthven. So please your highness, how he hath done you wrong
To offend the honour of your majesty
I dare not boldly say; but this I dare,
He hath done the king your husband's honour wrong
In this past all the rest, to hinder him
Of the crown matrimonial, which your grace
Made his by promise; other wrongs than this
Are more than I need speak of; for the lords,
He hath caused you banish a great part of them
And the most chief, and at this parliament
Forefault them as for treason, that himself
Who jets here in his cap and damask gown
Might of your grace be made a lord, and tread
On men more noble: wherefore with good cause
For very love I pray your majesty
Make not yourself his buckler who lacks heart
Save to pluck forth his hanger and not strike,
But cower behind and clasp your gown for shield.
Stand from before the window, lest perforce
I hale him hence by the hair.
Queen. Help us, our friends!
Thrust out this death-faced traitor.

Arthur Erskine. Sir, give way.
Robert Stuart. Out of this presence!
Ruthven. Lay no hands on me;
[*Draws.*
Stand; I will not be handled.

Enter FAULDONSIDE *and* SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS.

Queen. Out with him!
Rizzio. Save, save me, madam!
Queen. You are within my ward.
Stand from him, sirs; what! treason!
Fauldonside. Nay, then, thus.
[*Putting a pistol to her breast.*
Queen. Do him no wrong; ye dare not murder me:
If he have sinned let justice pass on him.
Fauldonside. This cord shall justify him.
Rizzio. Help me! help!
Sir George Douglas. Let go the queen.
Rizzio. Help me, my mistress!
Fauldonside. Out!
Queen. Have mercy!
Rizzio. Mercy! nay, I am innocent!
Save me, sweet lady!
Queen. Will ye slay me too?
Fauldonside. Drag him away; pluck his hands off her.
Rizzio. Help!
[*They force him out.*
Queen. Why does that sheath sit empty on your side?
Where is the dagger?

Darnley. Why, I know not where.

Queen. It will be known hereafter; it shall be
Dear blood to some of you if David's here
Be spilt, my faithful servant's; but may God,
My poor true friend, have mercy on your soul!

Ruthven. Here, take your wife into your arms, my lord,
And bid her fear not. Madam, have no fear;
We had sooner spend the blood of our own hearts
Than you should suffer harm; and what we do
Is but your husband's bidding. Let them pass:
He shall be kept for this time safe enough
In my lord's chamber here.

Darnley. Ay shall he, safe—
In that same chamber where you used of old
Before this fellow grew so in your grace
To come and seek me; but since he so fell
In credit with you and familiar use,
Even if I come to yours I find of late
Small entertainment of you, save so far
As David may sit third with us, and set
To cards with you even till an hour or twain
Be gone past midnight.

Queen. I have heard not said
It was a duteous gentlewoman's part
To seek her husband's chamber, but the man's
To seek the wife when he would aught with her.

Darnley. Why came you to my chamber then at first,
And ever till these few months back that he

Became familiar with you? or am I
In any part now of my body failed,
To fall out of your grace? or what disdain
Have you of me? or what offence of mine
Makes you not use me at all times alike,
Seeing I am willing to do all good things
That may become a husband to his wife?

Queen. My lord, of all the shame here done to me
You have the fault: for which sake I henceforth
Shall never be your wife nor lie with you,
Nor ever shall have liking of my life
Till I may make you bear as sore a heart
As I bear now.

Ruthven. Madam, for honour's sake,
Be reasonably and timely reconciled
To your wed lord; and with him take advice
Of such good friends as love you. Give me leave:
I am faint, and cannot stand to plead with you. [*Sits.*
Bring me to drink, for God's sake.

Darnley. Give my lord
A cup of wine.

Queen. Is this your malady?
If ye shall slay me or my six months' child
By this night's force and fear, my friends yet live
To wreak me of Lord Ruthven.

Ruthven. Be content.

Queen. When word goes forth how I am handled here—
What, am I kinless, think you, without help?
Mine uncles and my brother king of France,

All lords of all lands living, all heads crowned,
Shall be one storm to shake you from the world;
And the Pope with me, and the Catholic king,
And all that live or of my faith or blood,
Shall all make way upon you.

Ruthven. I am too mean
That these so many and mighty should take aim
At one such poor man here as I am. See,
If you will weigh it worthily yourself,
This is no treason; never till this night
Was so good service done you. For myself,
I will make answer to God's charge and man's
How I have served you in it.

Queen. What have I done?
What thing am I that ye should use me thus?
O miserable and desertless that I am,
Unkingdomed of mine honour! I that had
Lordship of land and natural rule of men
Am poorer here than any landless man
And weaker than all women. Pray you, sir,
By what law's sentence am I made man's thrall?
What lord have I offended that can bid
My face for shame be covered in your sight?
Whom have I wronged? or who hath power on me,
What thing soever I be, to do me wrong?
Who hath given forth judgment on me? what man's right
Calls me his servant? Nay, there is no slave
Men strike without a sentence; and ye strike
Your own right in me and your name to death
With one self-ruinous violence.

Ruthven. Be at peace;
We strike but your own sickness off yourself
Who cut off him to save you: the disease
That dies of the physician leaves no cause
That you should curse but thank him.

Queen. Thank? ay, thank—
God give me grace to give you thanks! be sure
Ye shall not lack my memory to it, nor will
To make me worthy of you. What, no more?

[*Exit* RUTHVEN.

I thought his wrath was large enough for me
To find a murderous part in where to die
And share it with my servant. Must I live?
Sir, you that make death warm between your lips,
And, silent, let fall murder from your mouth,
Have you no kiss to kill me? no love left
To give me poison? Why is he gone forth?
Hath the hot falsehood eaten through your tongue?
Speak.

Darnley. Why, I bade him look to those your friends
That might have risen upon us; hear you that?

[*Noise outside.*

There is a clamour of them in the courts,
But nought to help or hurt now. He is gone
To read our will out in the general ear,
And by proclaiming of my share with them
In this their new-born justice to make sure
Men's hearts that hearken; and lest fear shake our friends,
Or illwill toward us and goodwill toward you

Make our foes strong in malice of design,
To warn them of your brother's present speed,
Who must be here with morning: my device,
My trick to win all faiths that hang on him
And tie them to my service with his hand.
So have we all souls instant on our side,
And you no way to wound us: for by this,
Even with the hearing of my name given forth
As parcel of the bond that writes him dead,
Which is now cancelled with his bloodshedding,
This your good town is with us, and your lords
That stood for you with this man fled or dead,
If they dare strike or stand yet. What shift now?
What wit? what craft?

Queen. My friends driven forth the court?
No help upon my side? The town raised too?

Darnley. We had no heart nor wit to work with, ha?
We were your fools, and heartless?

Queen (*at the window*). Help, all friends!
All good men help your queen here! Ho, my lord,
My lord the Provost!

Darnley. He is raised indeed.

Queen. Help for the queen! help, Provost!

Darnley. Peace, I say;
You may fare worse: these are wild hours.

Voice without. Sit down;
You shall be hewn in pieces if you stir
And flung into the Nor'-Loch.

Darnley. Nay, be wise;
Pluck not their madness on you.

Queen. O, your love!
It shows now kindly in you.

Re-enter RUTHVEN.

Ruthven. All is sped;
The lords of the adverse party being roused up
And hearing with what large applause of men
The reading of our sentence in the bond
And names subscribed, and proclamation made
Of Murray even at heel of the act returned,
Was of all mouths made welcome, in fierce haste
Forth of their lodging fled confusedly
With no more tarriance than to bring their lives
Clear of the press and cry of peril at hand,
And their folk round them in a beaten rank
Hurled all together; so no man being left,
The earls of Huntley and of Bothwell gone,
To lift a hand against the general peace,
The townsmen, of their surety satisfied,
Brake up with acclamation of content
For the good comfort done them in this deed.

Queen. What have ye made my servant?

Ruthven. A dead dog.
His turn is done of service.

Darnley. Yea, stark dead?

Ruthven. They stabbed him through and through
with edge on edge
Till all their points met in him; there he lies,
Cast forth in the outer lodge, a piteous knave
And poor enough to look on.

Queen. I am content.
Now must I study how to be revenged.
Darnley. Nay, think not that way: make it not so much;
Be warned, and wiser.
Queen. Must I not, my lord?
You have taught me worthier wisdom than of words;
And I will lay it up against my heart.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

BOTHWELL.

TIME, FROM MARCH 10, 1566, TO FEBRUARY 9, 1567.

ACT II.

Scene I.—The Queen's Chamber.

Enter Darnley *and* Arthur Erskine, *severally.*

Darnley. Is the queen risen?

Arthur Erskine. She has not slept, my lord.
They say she is in some peril of mishap
Through the sore handling of this violent night;
Mortal mishap it may be.

Darnley. Ay! who say it?
What should be mortal to her? she was not sick
Nor near enough her danger.

Arthur Erskine. I am no leech;
Haply the fright of murderous menaces
And noise of swords is held medicinal;
The savour of a slain friend comfortable
And his blood balm: if these be healthful things,
You have given her weakness physic.

Enter the Queen.

Queen. Ah, our lord!
Comes he with death about him? I could take it

As readily as condemned men take reprieve,
For of a life much deadlier than itself
Death would reprieve me.

Darnley. I am come to bring you help.

Queen. You are ever helpful, even at all needs good,
For stroke or speech, good always. I am weak;
Let me have execution swift or soft;
Here is no strength to suffer.

Darnley. Sit, and rest.

Queen. Nay, I can stand; or should I kneel, my plight
Were one with my new fortune. You may go:
I have but private penitence to do,
And privy grace to get me; for indeed
I were stark mad to hope by any mean
For public pardon; I am condemned, and have
No hope but of such pity as dead men gain
Who living found no grace in the great world.

[*Exit* ARTHUR ERSKINE.

Now, what death, sir?

Darnley. You think not as you speak;
Your thought has other business than your tongue,
And death has no part in it.

Queen. I am assured
I must not live.

Darnley. Whose doom has passed on you?
Not mine; I would not have you go in fear;
You may be safe as I am.

Queen. As you, my lord?
I think I may, and yet may chance but find

A little day of surety.

Darnley. By mine honour,
My word and place of sovereignty is pledged
For your fair usage; they that unseat you
Shall find no king in me.

Queen. Nay, I think not.

Darnley. As they would have me friend and firm to them,
I told them, they should use you royally,
No state or privilege plucked off you; nay,
I have no thought by stolen strength of yours
To increase myself out of your weakness; only
I would have royalty remade in you,
And in your honour an honourable part;
See the state in you and the name shine fair,
And in your praise mine own praise perfected
As parcel of it, and in your good fame
Mine own fame stablished; as from your repute
Shaken or sullied, my name too takes soil,
And in your insufficience I wax weak,
So would I have the grace I gain and strength
Redound to youward; who being queen indeed,
I cannot seem unkingly.

Queen. 'Tis well thought.
It was my curse to know not in good time
How high a sense and royal of itself
I had in you so near me.

Darnley. That your thought,
Misdeeming me worth no more weight with you,
Hath brought us to this breach. Now lies it in you

To make all whole ; these lords that in my name
And for mine ends and with my leave rose up
To rid out peril and scandal from us all,
And make red-handed witness of themselves
Against the shame and scathe of royalty,
Are not the traitors of your thought, but keep
Faith flawless toward the personal empire here
And spirit of rule, dishonouring not the law
By forceful chastisement of secret breach
That did it bloodless violence ; this blood shed
Must heal indeed the privy hurt of law
And all but death of kingship, in such pass
Wasted and wounded ; but no hand of theirs
Would stab through you your holy majesty,
Cut off all life of law with yours, and make
Authority die with you one visible death ;
No thought put out your office, though yourself
Were found come short thereof, to leave this land
A kingless kingdom ; wherefore with good will
I counsel you make peace with their designs
And friends with mine intent, which for us both
Is but all power and honour.

Queen. So you see it ;
But were your eyes no flatterers of themselves
The sight were other : yet for my poor part
I cannot care though power be out of sight,
Save that mine honour visibly is marred
By wreck in you of either ; for indeed
Nor power nor honour shall hang on to you
If you must wear them but at will of men

And by strange leave of chance authority
Reign or not reign; but all concerns me not;
Rule as you may, be lord of that you can,
I can contend not with your lords or you,
Their master-servant. Pardon me; I am weak,
A feeble simple woman, without stay,
And witless of your worth; yet I might fear
Their policies were no good friends of yours,
Could we see all; men's hearts are manifold,
Not made of glass like women's such as mine,
At once transpicuous and perceptible
To eyes like yours that look their faults through; yet
Perchance you see more faults than lie there, spots
That are not natural to us; or make too much
Of our light thoughts and weakness; yet, your pardon:
You have reason in it, being more wise than we
And stronger in your regency of soul;
It may be you do well to bear me hard,
And I do ill who think to counsel you;
'Tis no great matter; for in no great while
My weakness will be medicine to itself
And end as I do: no default of mine
But must by dying be curable; and God knows
I little think to live.

Darnley. Why, have no fear;
You see I stand 'twixt you and all such threat.

Queen. Nay, I see not; but though you be my friend,
How far soever you stand out for me,
There is one threat that no man's help in the world

Can bring to nothing; here it speaks in me
Mortal; I know the word inevitable
That without breath or sound has called me dead;
I would not plead against it.

Darnley. Nay, you dream;
You jest or dream.

Queen. I do not; I am dead;
What, have you slain in jest, or in a dream
Have I seen death and felt him in my flesh,
Felt my blood turn and my veins fill with death
And the pang pass and leave me as I am,
Dead? for my state is pangless, and my pain
Perished; I have no life to bring forth pain,
Or painful fruit of life; I think in pity
God willed one stroke of sheer mortality
Should kill all possible pain and fear in me,
All after chance of ill; I cannot die
Twice, and can live not with my dead self here
Violently slain; I am sure I have no child;
I would but pray, if I had breath to pray,
For mere shame's sake and pity's, I might have
My women with me; and was not born to want
What our most poor bare natural womanhood
Seeks not in vain of meanest people; more
I seek of no man's mercy.

Darnley. You shall have it;
But this is fear and shaken heart in you—
I trust not very danger.

Queen. I that know
Must bear the peril and the sense alike

And patiently can bear, so but I have
Hope of your heart made soft towards me; sir,
Howe'er I have been untoward and confident
In my blind state and sovereign folly, now
God knows me if I have not need of love
Who have so much of pardon.
Darnley. Is this sure,
Such instant and such perilous press of time—
Or but your thought it may be?
Queen. Nay, my thought!
Is it my thought I am stricken to my death?
Is it my thought you have no pity of me?
Is it my thought I had looked at other time
For other joy of childbed, and such pangs
As bring glad women honour? not this death
That sunders me from fruit of mine own years
And youth and comfort, and mere natural hope,
And love that looks on many a worse than me?
Is it my thought that for small fault of mine,
And little lack of love and duteousness,
I am brought to shame and mortal chastisement?
Is it my thought love is not dead in me
For all this chastening? and my penitence
Wherewith I weep on my least wrong-doings past,
And faith wherewith I look for pardon yet,
For grace of you—is all this but my thought?
Darnley. By heaven, I will not have you wronged
of them.
You shall live safe and honourably.
Queen. My lord,

Who lives in such times honourably or safe,
When change of will and violence mutable
Makes all state loose and rootless? Think you, men
Who have dipped their hands in this red act with you
Will, as they wash them, so wash off their hearts
The burning spot of raw malignity
And fire and hunger of ambition made
So proud and full of meat, so rank in strength,
So grossly fed and fattened with fresh blood?
Is it for love of your name more than mine
These men that fought against my love of you,
And made rebellious wars on my free choice,
Smite now my very head and crown of state
In this night's hot and present stroke? Be sure
It is the throne, the name, the power in us
That here is stabbed and bleeds from such a wound
As draws out life of you no less than me
If you be part of majesty indeed.
Yea, howsoe'er you be now borne in hand,
They will but use you as an axe to smite,
A brand to set on fire the house of state
And in the doing be burnt up of itself.
Why, do but think with now more temperate blood
What are they that have helped you to this deed?
What friends to you? what faith toward royalty,
And what goodwill and surety of sound mind,
Have you found in them? or how put in proof?
What bond have their loves given you to confirm
Their hearts toward you stable? Nay, if this
Be all my pledge for honour and safe life,

They slide upon a slippery ground indeed.

Darnley. The pledge is mine, not theirs ; you have my word ;

No warrant of their giving, but of me ;
What ails you to go yet in fear of them?

Queen. Alas, I know not whom I need yet fear.
What men were they who helped you to this deed?
Yet it avails not me to know. I think
The fierce first root of violence was not set
Of you nor of your uncles, though I know
They of your mother's kinship love me not ;
But though their hearts, albeit one blood with yours,
Be bitter toward me, yet being of your blood
I would fain think them not so hard ; and yet
It was no gentle sight I had of them,
Nor usage ; I can see their eyes burn still,
And their brows meet against me. Such a sight
Again might wind all suffering up in me
And give it full release.

Darnley. It was their plot ;
That is, for love of me they felt the offence
Eat at their hearts ; I did not set them on ;
But wrath and shame's suspicion for my sake
Edged and envenomed ; then your policies too,
And injuries done the popular weal, the state
So far mishandled ; this was all men's talk,
Mine uncle's chiefly, Ruthven's, and his word
Was hot in the ear of Maitland and Argyle,
Showing the wrong done and the further fear,
More wide in issue and large in likelihood

Than all wrong done already ; nay, and plain ;
You would have given the state up to strange hands,
And for strange ends ; no dreaming doubt of mine,
But very vision, proof ; they held it so ;
And, by my faith, I with them.

Queen. Morton too ?
Was not his wit part of your wisdom ?

Darnley. Ay ;
Why, all heads highest, all subtlest, could not choose
But be one judgment and one counsel here,
In such a biting need ; yea, common fools,
Poor senseless knaves might see it.

Queen. Yea, visibly.
The sharpest wits and hands put armour on
To go forth strong against me ; little doubt
But fools and ignorance and the common mouth,
The very dust o' the street, the dross of man,
Must needs take fire with blowing of such wind
And stir at such men's passage : their mere feet
Moving would raise me up such enemies
From the bare ground. Ruthven—you said his breath
Was first to heat men's hearing with strange words
And set their hearts on edge—and at his touch
The quick-eyed Maitland and loose-souled Argyle,
Keen to catch fire or fear from other men's—
And the full-counselled Morton—by my life,
(That's but a little oath now) I think strange
To be at all alive, and have such men
So sore unfriends and secret, and their wits
So sharp to set upon so slight a thing.

How grew this up amongst you?

Darnley. Why, you see it;
No need to set men on; their swords were made
Of your own follies; yet have comfort; I,
That was so little made of, so less worth,
In your late judgment, will alone be guard
And buckler of you; come what counsel may,
It shall not hold against you with my will,
And cannot work without.

Queen. Nay, that were hard.
I thank you; but what counsel will they take,
Think you, which way to deal with me? my soul
Is womanly distempered and distract
With doubts of them—no fear of your good mind,
Of your firm love and fruitful—but, alas,
I am no strong man as you my guard, and ache
With new faint fear of their fresh angers: then,
This watch on me, my ways and rooms barred up,
No help nor issue, shakes and sickens me
With pangs for every stroke in the hour, that says
I am so much more time prisoner.

Darnley. For your guard,
It must be later taken off; the rest
I will find mean of help for. They are now
In council with your brother, new brought home
With seal from me of pardon to reverse
Your fresh and rash attainder, in my name
Now cancelled and made strengthless; and I think
There must three judgments be debated of;
Whether for hurt done to the common state

And treason to succession you must bear
Penance of death or life's imprisonment,
Which fear not I will have them put in form
Nor see it pass upon you ; the third mean
Is for some season that you be in ward
In Stirling Castle, till your warrant given
And free consent to this late justice done,
And to the new faith stablished in the realm
By right and rule of law, religiously,
And to mine own investiture as king.
Now for no fear at all or doubt of them
But very love and good desire toward you
I will go plead your part and take them sign
Of seasonable submission ; with which word
I doubt not but to reconcile their thoughts
And bring their loves back bounden to your feet.

Queen. Neither do I doubt. Let them draw this bond,
I will set hand to what they will of me ;
To seal you king needs now no grace of mine,
Hardly my leave ; and for their faith, it has
Too firm a foot for my poor power to shake,
Had I the will now molten in me strong
As ere the fire of fierce necessity
Had made it soft and edgeless ; for their deed,
Say, if they hold my word of pardon worth
More than mere scorn, I am bound to thank them, being
Masters of me and of my wrath or will,
And needing show me no such courtesy ;
And if it please them take mine oath and hand
To sign them safe and mark them from all charge

Sackless and scatheless, let them take it; alas,
I thought well they might rather take my life,
And yet I think well they would take indeed
But for your safeguard of me; would they not
Slay me? nay, by your honour tell me—nay,
I know they would, had I no guard in you,
Slay me defenceless.

Darnley. Have no fear; I have sworn
They shall not touch you roughly.

Queen. Swear again,
That I may quite rest confident, and yet
Swear not; I would not seem to hold you fast
To your own peril; better were I dead
Than you fell in their danger for my sake.
Ah, and I know not, I may hardly think
I have you surely on my side.

Darnley. By heaven,
You shall want nothing of my help or love.

Queen. How had you heart to go so near my death?

Darnley. I had no mind to hurt you.

Queen. None? well, none—
I will not think it; yet I was nigh dead.
You saw my very death here at my breast
Where your child is not yet—I did not think
To feel instead there murder's iron lips
For his soft suckling mouth.

Darnley. Come, think not of it.

Queen. I had not time to think of it indeed.
But I think now you will have hardly power
To match your will to save me, if their will

Shall yet be mortal to me; then I saw
You had not power or had not will; and now
I know not which you have yet.
Darnley. They shall find
I have power enough and will to turn them.
Queen. Well—
I lean then on your hand. If you were mine,
Though they were subtler and more strong in hate,
They should not hold me here in peril.
Darnley. How?
Queen. No matter, so their guard were less on me.
Darnley. You would take flight then?
Queen. Ay, with you for wing
To lift me out of prison.
Darnley. Whither?
Queen. Nay,
I am but the fool of your keen flattering wit,
Who let you see my little hope that lives
To see my some day sunnier: yet God knows
Without light of you it were lustreless.
I can look forth not or heave up my hand
But with your help to stay me.
Darnley. Surely no,
As you stand now you cannot; and I were
A faithless fool to mine own fortune, if
I loosed you out of sight for wantonness,
Who have you now in hand: but for all this
It may be flight were no such unwise mean
To assure our free and mutual power on them
And show them simply subject; as it is,

They have some show of hold on us which makes
Our reign and freedom questionable and slight :
I see some reason in it.

Queen. Why, do you think
That you being here their gaoler in their eye
Can be their king too, or not rather they
Lords both of gaol and warder? they will hold you
But as the minister of their power on me,
Of no more office than a door-keeper
Nor honour than their headsman : but fled hence
You are very king indeed, by your own hand,
Lord of the life you give and majesty,
By no man's furtherance and no grant of theirs
Made pensioner and proxy for their reign
Who should bear rule and you the semblance, worn
As mask of all their faces, glove of hands,
And hollow trumpet blown of all their mouths,
But mine and all their free and sovereign king.

Darnley. Why, so I say ; they must be borne in hand ;
Look you, we must not set their fears on edge,
They shall suspect not : I will take them word,
And bring them to you for your bond.

Queen. Meantime,
I will but walk an hour here hand in hand
With my good brother ; let me speak to him
While they shall draw the schedule.

Darnley. I will bid him
Attend you, and your women ; but be sure
You take him not to counsel : he is wise,

And full of malice : let him not be part
Of our new mind.
Queen. He shall not.
Darnley. But you smile—
What should he do to know it?
Queen. He shall not know.
Darnley. Well, you shall see him, and they take off your guard;
I will make sure : but when and by what means
Think you to fly?
Queen. To-night.
Darnley. God help your wit!
To-night?
Queen. Before the change of watch ; I have said ;
Weak as I stand, and burdened, and soul-spent,
I will be hence. Mistrust me not for strength ;
My soul shall make my body like itself,
A servant armed to wait upon my thought
And page my purpose as its minister
Till the end be held in hand. This guard removed,
I will find ways out to win forth to-night,
Fear not, and servants. Go now to the lords
With all submissive mild report of me,
And bring them to receive my word and hand
To confirmation of what bond they please
For pardon and possession of their will ;
And for your kingship—sir, assure yourself
That in few hours it shall be seen and sure
You shall need never seek their loves again
Or hands to help you to it or tongues to cry,

Nor be called king by will of any man
Nor lord by choice of any friend on earth.
Darnley. Nay, I would need no voices.
Queen. And be sure
You shall not build your power on loves of theirs
Nor live by their election. Go, and thrive:
Think how my faith and hope and love in you
Find all their rest and stronghold, and on them
Set up your trust and standard of your strength.
[*Exit* DARNLEY.

So much is done; go thou then first to death;
For from this hour I have thee. Heart, lie still,
Till I may make those mightier traitors mine
That shall be swords for me to smite him with,
And then be free as fire.

Enter MARY BEATON.

Hast thou no news?
Mary Beaton. The lord of Bothwell lies at secret ward
To bear you forth of peril here by force;
He has gathered up his men beyond the walls
To break this guard upon you when you will,
If at your suit it shall not be withdrawn;
Here is his token brought me privily
For your own hand.
Queen. No, in my heart it is,
My love and lord, thy token; this poor heart
That ere mine ear is smitten with thy name
Hears it and turns to springing fire. What thanks
Would I not rather pay than these of words

For this thy loving speed? Yet send him these,
And bid him, I would fain say come, but wait
Till I have tried my traitors; if my tongue
Win them to slack their hold on me to-night,
We may speed surelier; if their hands hold fast,
Then let him smite and slay and set me free.
I would have all their heads here in my lap,
Tell him, not one or two slain suddenly,
That their blood shed may seem not spilt by chance
Nor lost and won in hazard of affray
But sacrificed by judgment, and their names
Who would have made of royalty in me
Ruin, and marred the general name of king,
Shall with their lives be perfectly put out,
Royally ruined; wherefore if I may
I will steal forth with subtle help of words,
Not break their bonds with violence; in which hope
Bid him watch close. [*Exit* MARY BEATON.
And when his watch is done
It will be morning, and the sun shall break
As fire for them that had their hour by night
And light for wrath to see them and to slay.

Re-enter ARTHUR ERSKINE, *introducing* MURRAY.

Arthur Erskine. Madam, my lord of Murray.

Queen. Ah, my brother,
Had you been here they had not used me thus.

Murray. I am sorry, madam, such things should be done
As even the strain of sharp necessity

Can make but fierce and bitter.

Queen. Is this all?

Nay, it was necessary then and just,
Or I must seem and strive to think it was,
If you say so. But in my present sight,
Now when a feather's or a flower's weight borne
Might make life stoop within me, sense break down,
All strong capacities of nature fail;
Now when the hardest heart with iron bound
Might turn to very mercy for my sake,
Here in mine eye to do my friend to death—
For howsoe'er ye hold him, yet being dead
I will not say but he was friend of mine
Who lies now dead and slaughtered—nay, by heaven,
I will not cast that name of friend away
Because the man my friend is slain for me—
I say, to kill him at my knee, to stain
An unborn child's brow with his murdered blood,
To affray with sanguine hands, shake with sheer blows,
The weak and holy warders of the womb,
The reverence and remembrance of us all
For that which bare us hidden before birth
And after was called mother—O, this deed,
This, though all law were cast out of the world,
All grace forgotten—this, you will not say
But they did ill who did it. What, you weep?
These tears are made of our dear father's blood,
Who left in each of us such part of him
As must yearn each toward other, and divide
At need their mutual suffering: I knew well

I need not fear to find not in your heart
Some natural seed of comfort.

Murray. That I weep
I take no shame, to see you; but mine eyes
Receive more comfort than their tears can give
To see, for all this rash and ruthless night,
Yet you stand up unwounded, and your heart
Is left you to put spirit in your speech
Not like a sick man's; if you have no hurt,
No hurt is done though they did violently:
For this man's life was as a present death
To the well-being and peace of all your state,
Which by the force of justice done on him
Stands now in surety. I would pray you make
Your profit of your pain herein, being wise,
As you well may; for this was not the man
That you saw slain, but the man's policy,
Stabbed through with all their daggers; and you see
How it lies dead and outcast. I beseech you,
For your own love and honour of high rule,
Set not your heart toward it to raise it up
That men would bury, lest the graveyard reek
Of dead men's craft and strange men's creeds brought back
Prove poison to you.

Queen. I will do what men will.
I must not die then?

Murray. There are those would have it,
For scandal and offence cast on the realm
By shame done to the popular commonwealth

In majesty made shameful; as they say
Through you it hath been, and your dealings known
With this dead friend; some that would leave you life
Spake of life spent in sharp imprisonment
Unto your death's day; but by mine award
You are quit of either danger; you must live
But under guard till you by word approve
This man's despatch for necessary and just,
Submit yourself to call your husband king,
And own the true faith rooted in this realm
For lawful and for sovereign here of rule.
So much you shall.

Queen. Nay, I will more than this.
I will seal now what you will have me seal,
What bond soever: let them come to me
Who wrought this murderous matter but last night
That I may sign their pardon with my tongue
Ere they can crave or threaten. Let them come;
So shall my perfect purpose be more plain
Freely in all things to submit myself—
I have your word already—to their will:
Ay, even with all my new submissive heart,
As else I cannot choose; for what am I
That I should think much to submit myself?

Murray. You shall do wisely to keep faith with them
And make your word your action's measure; so
Shall hearts now loosened from you be made fast
And love reclaimed wait on you loyally
Through all your land's length. See, the lords are come.

Enter DARNLEY, MORTON, *and* RUTHVEN.

Queen. Good morrow, sirs; ye gave me no good night,
Yet are you welcome even as life or death
Were welcome to me, coming with your will;
For without love of my good lords my life
Were scarce worth holding out against their will,
But if it please them I should die not yet,
For their love's sake I give it welcome. Sirs,
I have heard what terms ye lay upon mine head,
And bow beneath them willingly, being sure
It is but meet I should submit myself,
It is but fit mere majesty bow down
To take the burden by good men and wise
Imposed upon it; nor shall this be hard;
For what ye did so suddenly and swift,
If there be power of pardon in me, here
With as good heart even as ye did the deed
Do I forgive it; nay, I should give you thanks
That ye vouchsafe of me to be forgiven;
For what am I among you? Let the bond
Be drawn between us presently to sign,
While for an hour's space I will walk and wait
Here with my noble brother, hand in hand,
And heart reposed on heart, eyes answering eyes,
With pure plain faith; for what now in the world
Should lies or dumb dissembling profit me
Though I were natural liar? as I do trust
Ye shall not find me but most faithful; yet,

If I were falser than the foam of the sea
And wilfuller than wind, what should I do,
Being yours, to mock you and myself, and lie
Against mine own life? for ye see me, sirs,
How I stand bare between you, without strength,
At your mere mercy, with no friend on earth
If ye will be mine unfriends; and I think
To live but by your grace and leave, who might
If ye were minded speak me out of life
Or sign me dead with smiling; I were mad
To play with lies, who feel your hands on me
So heavy as they are, and have no hope
Save to be pitied and believed of you.
I pray you then have faith in me, who live
In your faith only, and if it fail me here
Must die the lowliest death in all the world,
And no man's hand to help me.

Darnley. She says truth;
There is no hand.

Morton. Madam, though faith stand fast,
Yet fear hath something here to say of you,
And wisdom to remember; we must think
That what is done in service of yourself
You cannot hold good service when it comes
So masked in blood, so vizarded like death,
As this of ours doth; and that yet in time
You may find mean to wreak your wrath on us
For having strangely served you, and perforce
Given desperation and the dangerous time
So desperate a deliverance from despair.

We have saved you in this service done the state,
Who must have else been broken in the breach
Of the state's order and the popular law
By this man living violently misused;
But cannot hope yet for such thanks of you
As even the deed deserves whose fierce despatch
Has shaken you with thunder, and its flame
Still makes your eyes blind to the good work done
And sharp need felt of it; so must this be,
And so must we take heed lest being yet blind
We give you scope and mean to hurt yourself.

Queen. I did not think the thing was yet alive
That could fear me.

Darnley. Nay, look you, she says right;
We have no room to fear her.

Queen. Lo, my lords,
How dangerous and how strong a thing it is
That threatens here your state and safety; see,
It is no less than woman, and unarmed,
Half dead, unfriended, hard on childbearing,
Naked of arms or means; it were not wise
To leave unguarded, without spies or swords
About her path, so great a danger; yea,
Wise men would rather fear her force too much
Than good men show compassion. Do your wills;
I am well content to know you wise, and so
To bear what hard or lighter weight ye please;
How sore soever, God knows, I believe
It shall not long afflict me.

Murray. In my mind,

It now shall less distract the general eye
With apprehension of strange times and strife
To see the ways again made clear, and gates
Not crowded up with guard.

Darnley. Why, so I said.

Ruthven. So I say not. Bear with me though I seem
Less confident or free of heart than men,
Whose minds are gentle as their names, should be
In things of common care; what hurt may come
By fault of us we know not, but we know
It is no private peril; if we err,
Not we nor ours must only ache for it,
But the whole popular heart of this great land
Must bleed and break for our false friendship shown
And confident remission of our cause
And very duty toward her, through mere wish
To be called gentle toward her enemies.

Queen. I am her enemy then: where lies my strength?
What field? what weapon? how shall we make war,
Take truce and break it, with what equal face
Stand brow to brow for battle? By this hand,
I knew not yet how strong it was, nor worth
How many hands of swordsmen; were this true,
I might wax proud to be so terrible,
Seeing in such great men's eyes so great a fear
And only mine own fearful face therein
As in a mirror shadowed.

Darnley. 'Tis mere truth;
We should be shamed to seem in fear of her,

Yea, made a mockery in men's eyes and mouths
For base and blind misgiving.

Ruthven. You, my lords
And equals with me in the proof of years,
In the age of counsel and experience borne
Of common service done our natural state,
Shall best pass judgment if in hate or fear
I speak for mine own ends or enmities
To turn your hearts from honour; for the queen,
As she shall be toward God, so I toward her
Would be fast friend and servant; but wherein
She is not friend with heaven nor with the state
I were no friend to serve her, nor to say
There were no danger and no sin to serve.
Ye must all think I think not to live long;
And being so signed of sickness for my grave
With such a mortal seal, I speak alive
As one being dead that speaketh; if ye lose
The grace of God here won by your own hands,
The power ye have to serve him, and the effect
Of his good hour, through negligence of will
Or pride or pity, ye shall see the state
Break from your hands, and for one devil cast out
Seven entered in its body. Sirs, take heed;
The least thing lightly overlooked or done
May undo all things wrought. Keep fast your guards;
By the king's counsel if they be withdrawn,
Upon his head that bade them go shall rest
What bloodshed ever follows; yet in time
Think nothing weak that is not with us; each

May have some sting or weapon of itself
That till sloth feel it sees not.

Queen. A wise rule:
So should the wary wolf pen up the lambs,
The falcon set good guard upon the wren,
For fear of teeth or talons.

Murray. We will give
To the king's hand the bond for yours to sign;
Meantime all ease and reverence shall you have,
And freedom for your household folk to serve
As best your need may bid them.

Queen. Sirs, farewell.
I will not pray you do but what ye will,
Which shall seem wisely to me.—Let me have
Word of their instant sentence. [*Aside to Darnley.*

Darnley (*aside*). With all speed.

[*Exeunt* DARNLEY, MURRAY, MORTON, *and* RUTHVEN.

Queen. Where are my servants Standen and Traquair?

Arthur Erskine. At hand to serve your highness.

Queen. Ah, to serve!
My highness is brought low, too low to claim
Service of men; if I may find but love
Or only pity of any, this shall be
All utmost service I desire of them.
I have but my sorrows to my subjects left,
And these rebellious; yet I keep what state
And rule I may upon them. Tell those twain
I pray their patience lend me but the time
To hear what I would have them, and to choose

If they will do it for pity.

Arthur Erskine. Think them here
And your will done already. [*Exit.*

Queen. Yea, my will!
What knowest thou may my will be? by this light,
I feel a heat and hurry of the heart
That burns like joy; my blood is light and quick,
And my breath comes triumphantly as his
That has long laboured for a mountainous goal
And sets fast foot on the utmost cliff of all.
If ere the race be run my spirit be glad,
What when it puts the palm of peril on
And breathes clear air and conquers? Nay, I think
The doubt itself and danger are as food
To strengthen and bright wine to quicken me
And lift my heart up higher than my need,
Though that be high upon me.

Re-enter ERSKINE *with* TRAQUAIR *and* STANDEN.

Now, my friends,
Ye come unlike to courtiers, come to serve
Me most unlike a queen: shall I think yet
I have some poor part in your memories safe,
And you some care of what I was, and thought
How I fare now? Shall I take up my hope,
That was cast down into the pit of death,
To keep the name God gave me, and the seal
That signs me royal, by your loves and faiths
Recrowned and reinstated? Say but no,
Or say but nought, this hope of mine and heart

Are things as dead as yesterday: my cause
Lies in your lips, to comfort or confound,
As ye see reason. Yet, as power is yours,
So let remembrance in you be for light
To see the face of the time by; so let faith,
Let noble pity and love be part of you,
To make you mindful what a cause it is
That ye must put in judgment, and what life
For fame or shame to you through all time born
Ensues upon your sentence; for ye choose
If ye will match my dangers with your faiths
And help me helpless with your hearts, who lie
By grief and fear made heartless; or lend hand
To make my weakness weaker, and break down
My broken wall of sovereignty; which now
Ye wot were no sore labour.

Standen. Let him die
As heartless toward the grace of God, who hath
No heart in him to give its blood for yours!

Traquair. So say we all your servants.

Queen. Did I know it?
Methinks I knew when I bade send for you.
Ye should so say. Ah friends, I had no fear
But I should find me friends in this fierce world,
Or I had died unfriended. Shall I thank you
For being the true men and the kind ye are,
Or take your service thankless, since I thought
Ye could not else, being young and of your kinds,
But needs must be my help? ye have not hearts
To strike but at men weaponed; ye would not

Lay hard hand on a woman weak with child,
A sick sad woman that was no man's queen
Of all that stood against her; yet her son,
The unborn thing that pleads again with you
As it could plead not with them, this dumb voice,
This sightless life and sinless, was their king's,
If ever they would let it come to life.
Lo, here their aim was; here the weapons went
That should have stabbed to death the race of kings
And cut their stem down to the root; here, here
The pistol's mouth that bruised my breast, the hand
That struck athwart my shoulder, found their mark,
Made here their point to shoot at; in my womb
By them the bud of empire should have died
That yet by you may live and yet give thanks
For flower and fruit to them that saved the seed.

Standen. They shall die first.

Traquair. Command us what next way
There is to serve you, though the way were fire
We would be through it.

Queen. To-night then at first watch
I purpose with the man's help—nay, what name
Shall his be now? king, husband, or, God help,
King's father?—with the man that you called king
As I called husband, to win forth of bonds
By the close covered passage underground
That by strange turns and strait blind working ways
Winds up into the sovereign cemetery
Whose dust is of my fathers; therewithout
Wait you with horse; and when you see us rise

Out of the hollow earth among the dead,
Be ready to receive and bear us thence.
Some two hours' haste will speed us to Dunbar,
Where friends lie close, and whence with sudden strength
I trust to turn on these good lords again.
Do this for such poor love's sake as your queen's,
And if there be thanks worthy in the world,
Them shall she give ; not silver, sirs, nor gold,
Nor the coined guerdon that is cast on churls
To coin them into service ; but a heart,
If not worth love, yet loving, and a faith
That will die last of all that dies in me
And last of all remembrances foregone
Let your names go. God speed you, and farewell.

SCENE II.—RUINS OF THE ABBEY OF HOLYROOD.

Enter ARTHUR ERSKINE, TRAQUAIR, *and* STANDEN.

Standen. It must be time ; the moon is sick and slow
That should by this be higher.

Arthur Erskine. It is your eye
Whose sight is slow as sickness ; for the moon
Is seasonable and full : see where it burns
Between the bare boughs and the broken tombs
Like a white flower whose leaves were fire : the night
Is deep and sharp wherein it hangs, and heaven
Gives not the wind a cloud to carry, nor
Fails one faint star of all that fill their count

To lend our flight its comfort; we shall have
Good time of heaven and earth.

Traquair. How shall the steeds
Be shared among us?

Arthur Erskine. If she keep her mind,
My English gelding best shall bear the queen,
And him the Naples courser. Hark, they come.

Standen. It was a word said of the wind to hear
What earth or death would answer. These dead stones
Are full of hollow noises though the vault
Give tongue to no man's footfall; when they come
It will speak louder. Lo how straight that star
Stands over where her face must break from earth
As it hath broken; it was not there before,
But ere she rise is risen. I would not give
The third part of this night between us shared
For all the days that happiest men may live
Though I should die by morning.

Traquair. Till she come,
I cannot choose but with my fears take thought,
Though all be after her sweet manner done
And by her wise direction, what strange ways
And what foul peril with so faint a guard
Must of so tender feet be overpast
Ere she win to us.

Arthur Erskine. All these with laughing lips
Shall she pass through; the strength and spring of soul
That set her on this danger will sustain
Those feet till all her will and way be won.
Her spirit is to her body as a staff

And her bright fiery heart the traveller's lamp
That makes all shadow clear as its own light.

Enter from the vaults the QUEEN *and* DARNLEY.

Queen. Here come the wind and stars at once on us;
How good is this good air of that full heaven
That drives the fume back of the sepulchres
And blows the grave away! Have no more fear;
These are no dead men.

Darnley. Nay, I fear no dead;
Nothing I fear of quick or dead but God.
Shall I not go before you?

Queen. Not a foot.
See you, my friends, what valiant hearts are here,
My lord's and mine, who hardly have crept forth,
In God's fear only, through the charnel-house,
Among the bones and skulls of ancient kings
That thought not shame to stand for stumbling stones
In their poor daughter's way, whose heart had failed.
But that his hardier heart held up her feet
Who even if winds blew did not shrink nor shake
For fear of aught but God. The night is kind,
And these March blasts make merry with the moon
That laughs on our free flight. Where stand your steeds?

Arthur Erskine. Madam, hard by in shadow of the stones;
Please you, this way.

Queen. I will to horse with you.

Darnley. No, but with me.

Queen. It is not my good will.
Ride you alone, and safer. Friend, your arm.

SCENE III.—MURRAY'S LODGING IN HOLYROOD.

Enter MURRAY, MORTON, *and* RUTHVEN.

Morton. There is no present help; the violent speed
Of these fierce days has run our chances down.
It is found certain she comes back to-day;
Soon as their flight drew bridle at Dunbar,
Yet hot from horse, she sends for Bothwell in
With all his border thievery, red-foot knaves,
The hardiest hinds of Liddesdale; next him
His new bride's brother, Huntley, more in care
To win the land back than revenge the blood
His father lost for treason; after these
Caithness with Athol, and the queen's chief strengths,
The earl marshal and the archbishop; in few days
Eight thousand swords to wait on that sweet hand
Was worth so little manhood; then Argyle,
Who should have been a sea-wall on our side
Against the foam of all their faction, he,
Struck to the heart with spite and sharp despair
Through proof late made of English faith—as you,
My lord of Murray, felt it when ye twain
Sought help and found false heart there—casts himself
Over upon her side; with him two more
Her last year's rebels, Rothes and Glencairn,
And pardon sealed for all that rose with them
Who were not of our counsel in this death.
Thus fare we without help or hope of these,
And from the castle here of Edinburgh

The hot Lord Erskine arms in our offence
His mounted guns, making the queen more strong
Than had her flight won first its darkling walls
And for a free camp in the general field
Set up her strength within the fortress here
Which serves her now for outwork, while behind
The whole force raised comes trooping to her hand.
In this deep strait that our own hands have dug
And our own follies channelled, to let in
Storm on our sails and shipwreck on our hopes,
My counsel is that whoso may stand fast
Should here in harbour bide his better day,
And we make land who may not; you, my lord,
As by James Melville she solicits you,
May honourably assure your peace with her,
Being speckless in her sight of this man's blood;
We that dipped open hand in it must hence,
And watch the way of the wind and set of storm
Till the sea sink again.

Ruthven. Sir, so say I;
You serve not us a whit nor change our chance
By tarrying on our side. Let no man fly
For our deed's sake but we that made our deed
The witness for us not to be gainsaid
By foe of ours or friend we have on earth.
It was well done; what else was done, and ill,
We must now bear the stroke of, and devise
Some healing mean in season. This is sure,
That faith or friendship shall have no long life
Where friendship is engraffed on breach of faith;

But shame, despite, division, and distrust
Shall eat the heart out of their amity,
And hate unreconcile their heartless hands
Whom envious hope made fast or cunning fear.
This cannot be but nigh : and ye that live
Shall see more sure for this blind hour's default
And hold more fast and watch more heedfully
The new chance given for this chance cast away.
I shall not see it, how near soe'er ; and yet
The day that I shall die in banishment
Is not much nigher than must their doom's day be
Whose trust is in the triumph of their hour.
Mine is now hard on end ; but yours shall last,
I doubt not, till its service be all done
And comfort given our people. Take the Laird's
Grange and Pittarrow with you to the queen ;
Ye shall find peace and opportunity
With present welcome as for proffered love ;
Make swift agreement with her ; this shall be
The surest staff that hope may take in hand.
Farewell.

Murray. I would not say it, if ye not knew
My faith departs not with me from your side
Nor leaves the heart's bond broken of our loves ;
But in this trust, though loth, I take farewell,
To give you welcome ere the year be dead.

Ruthven. Me shall you not, nor see my face again,
Who ere the year die must be dead ; mine eyes
Shall see the land no more that gave them light,
But fade among strange faces ; yet, if aught

I have served her, I should less be loth to leave
This earth God made my mother.

Murray. Then farewell,
As should his heart who fares in such wise forth
To take death's hand in exile. I must fare
Ill now or well I know not, but I deem
I have as much as you of banishment
Who bear about me but the thought of yours.

SCENE IV.—HOLYROOD.

The QUEEN *and* SIR JAMES MELVILLE.

Queen. Am I come back to be controlled again,
And of men meaner? must I hold my peace
Or set my face to please him? Nay, you see
How much miscounselled is he, strayed how far
From all men's hope and honour, and to me
How strange and thankless, whom in self-despite
You will me yet to foster: I would live
Rather the thrall of any hind on earth.

Melville. I would but have your wisdom hide somewhile
The sharpness of your spirit, whose edge of wrath
There is no man but now sees manifest;
As there is none who knows him that hath cause
To love or honour; yet great pity it is
To see what nobler natural mind he had
And the first goodness in him so put out
By cursed counsel of his mother's kin,
The bastard Douglas, and such ill friends else

As most are unfriends : but this fire in you
Who chose him, being so young, of your own will,
Against the mind of many, for your lord,
Shall rather burn yourself than purge his mood,
And the open passion of your heart and hate
Hearten in him the hate he bears not you
But them that part you from him. Twice, you know,
Or now my tongue were less for love's sake bold,
Twice hath it pleased your highness charge me speak
When time or need might seem for counsel ; then
That thus you charged me, now such need is come,
Forgive that I forget not.

Queen. I might well,
Did you forget, forgive not ; but I know
Your love forgot yet never any charge
That faith to me laid on it ; though I think
I never bade you counsel me to bear
More than a queen might worthily, nor sought
To be advised against all natural will,
That with mine honour now is joined to speak
And bid me bear no more with him, since both
Take part against my patience. For his hate,
Henceforth shall men more covet it than fear ;
My foot is on its head, that even to-day
Shall yield its last poor power of poison up,
And live to no man's danger till it die.

Enter DARNLEY *and* MURRAY.

Welcome, dear brother and my worthy lord,
Who shall this day by your own word be clear

In all men's eyes that had ill thoughts of you.
Brother, to-day my lord shall purge himself
By present oath before our councillors
Of any part in David's murdered blood,
And stand as honourable in sight of all
Whose thought so wronged him as in mine he doth
Who ever held him such as they shall now.

Murray. Must he swear this?

Darnley. Who says I shall not swear?

Queen. He has given his faith to swear so much to-day,
And who so shameless or so bold alive
As dare doubt that?

Murray. Not I: in God's name, no;
No more than any other.

Darnley. Nay then, well;
I am not angry.

Queen. 'Tis the noblest mood
That takes least hold on anger; those faint hearts
That hold least fire are fain to show it first;
The man that knows himself most honourable
Fears least or doubts if others hold him so;
But he that has small honour in himself
Is quick to doubt what men may deem of him
And thence most swift in anger as in fear
Of men's imagined judgments; praised be God,
Our lord is none such. Is the deed not drawn
That gives into our servant Bothwell's hand
The forfeit lands of Maitland for his own
That by his former fault stand forfeited?

Murray. Is it your purpose he shall have those lands?

Queen. It is my very purpose.

Murray. I grieve at it.

Queen. Grieve or be glad, it stands my purpose yet.
We should be gone to meet our councillors;
My heart thinks long till it shall know my lord
Held of the world as noble as of me.

Darnley. It is not time.

Queen. No, but much more than time.
Come with me, brother. [*Exeunt* QUEEN *and* MURRAY.

Melville. I am sorry for your grace.

Darnley. You must not think I know not all this while
That she doth mock me.

Melville. Nay, her mood may change.

Darnley. Never for me. I had been much better dead
Than cast off thus, who cast mine own friends off
And knew not for whose sake. She hath slain the men
Who kept that night the gates while he was slain;
I would she had rather taken too my blood
Than put my life to shame; yet I may live
To put that off upon her; had I friends,
Shame should go back from me to her, who thinks
To lay it on her wedded lord and laugh;
As I may one day laugh yet. Hear you news
Of Morton and mine uncle?

Melville. They are fled;
I hear but this, not whither.

Darnley. As they brewed,
So let them drink; the hands were none of mine
That mixed that cup to them; so much I swear,
And may so much with honour. Yet would God
I had not chosen to lose their loves for hers,
And found so cold her favour. Scarce escaped,
Scarce out of bonds, half breathless yet with flight,
No mind was in her of my help, my love,
My hand that brake her prison; for all this,
My kin forsaken, mine own wrongs and griefs
Forgotten, mine own head imperilled, mine
For hers that I delivered and perchance
To leave within their danger had done well,
No thought or thanks I get of her: and these
That had I stood by them might stand by me
When I shall need, may mock me for her fool
And curse me for their traitor. Yet I think,
Were I once clear of her as now of these,
Please God, to make mine own strength by myself,
Being both ways free; I know not well yet how,
But I will take mine own part yet or die. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—A STREET.

Enter TWO BURGESSES.

First Burgess. What is this news that flies so in the dark
Like a night-bird whereof we know it is
But of what wing we know not?

Second Burgess. This that comes
From the exiled lords in England, to make bare
The face of Darnley's falsehood, with what lips
He swore his deed away and damned himself?
They had no sooner knowledge of such shame
Than word was sent of him through all the land,
Large witness of his full complicity
And conscience with them of the work to be
For which they groan in barren banishment
While he crawls here before the scornful queen,
And has betrayed the blood of his allies
To the axe's edge of unjust judgment.

First Burgess. One
By treason of his tongue already slain
Now speaks of him with breathless mouth to God;
And Maitland and two more lie under doom
Through but his witness: yet for all this shame
It seems he has won small guerdon save the shame,
But hath his treason for his treason's fee;
And this more comfort, to behold the man
That by his lips and nobler hands than his
Was done to righteous death, and thrust in earth
Before the main door of this Abbey church,
Unearthed again and nobly reinterred
Hard by the grave's edge of Queen Magdalen,
That men may judge how near he grew alive
To the queen's side yet living; where instead
A worthier stay now in her brother stands
For her false lord to look upon and loath
No less than David, and much more to fear,

Whom with that David he laid trains to slay
Aforetime, and again made vaunt but now
In the queen's sight to slay him; or so herself
Gave word to the earl, and willed him make demand
Of the king's own false fearful mouth; but he,
Whom thus perchance she sought to make the sword
To pierce her husband, modestly bespake
Before her face this caitiff like a friend,
And was put off with faint excuse; and yet,
Heart-wrung to see him stand or any man
Fast in her favour, like one sick with grief
The king flies forth to Glasgow, where apart
His father's head is hidden; and there as here
He sits not in men's sight now royally,
But with some six or eight goes up and down
Even where he lists, and none takes note of him;
While the miscounselled queen, grown high in mind,
Holds privy commerce with the brood o' the Pope
Whose plots corrupt the northward English air,
And with the murderous Irish, to put out
The live light of our God from sea to sea
With insurrection of the fires of hell
And smoke of slaughter; meantime she reclaims
Of the English queen for prisoners to her hand
The death-doomed lords in exile; and men say
They find scant countenance of the southern court;
Yet they think not she will deliver them.

Second Burgess. One is there hath found sure deliverance;
No chain of man's can mark him prisoner more,

Nor whence he rests can any banish him;
Ruthven is dead.

First Burgess. God hath his friend then safe;
For God's friend he was ever; and hath died
Most fortunately; seeing not what we live
Too soon to see.

Second Burgess. He was a nobler man
Than his own name was noble; no Scot born
More true to the old love of his natural land
Nor stouter-hearted on the gospel side
Of all that stood to serve it. Yet have these
As valiant servants; Morton, though cast out,
Lives secret yet in England, whence the queen
Dares not I think for shame's sake yield him up
To this queen's bloody judgment, or for fear
And hostile heart she will not. We shall know
Shortly what upshot God will bring of all;
Whate'er this be, there will be none again
That shall do Darnley good.

First Burgess. I saw him swear
That day before the council; he was pale
As one half drunken, stammering as in wrath,
With insolent forehead and irresolute eyes,
Between false fear and shameful hardihood,
With frontless face that lied against itself,
And trembling lips that were not yet abashed
For all their trembling.

Second Burgess. Ay, good cause was there
To shake him to the soul, having cast off
Friendship and faith of good men, yet being still

Signed with their enemies' blood too plain and broad
To gain the goodwill of unrighteousness.
When his day comes that men are weary of him,
God shall strike home.

First Burgess. Then should that stroke be swift;
For evil and good alike are weary of him.

SCENE VI.—CASTLE OF ALLOA.

MURRAY *and* DARNLEY.

Darnley. Shall I not see her? but if I see her not
I will be wroken of you that shut me out,
By God I will. What, are ye not combined,
You, my false-blooded brother, demi-prince,
And Bothwell, and the trustless fool Argyle,
With her to unmake me? I shall foil you though,
Yea, were all three made each a triple man
With thrice your heart and wit.

Murray. You strike too high
And shear but air in sunder: there's none yet
That wills you so much evil as yourself,
Would you but think it. Turn your wrath on me,
It cannot wound or fright out of its peace
A soul that answers not your hate, nor works
By night or light against you.

Darnley. Swear me that,
And if a devil there be I am rid of you
Whom he will gripe at once and hale to hell;
You took not word to Melville from my wife

Of warning with rebuke for his past pains
To reconcile us, and with charge to be
No more familiar with me for her sake;
You were not of her counsel to lie in
At Stirling, whence she fled from sight of me,
Who following hither was again cast off,
And till our child was born in Edinburgh
Might scarce have sight of her, and may not now
When scarce a month delivered she comes back
To take by sea and land her pleasure here
Of hunt or sail among the firths and hills
In such fair fellowship as casts out mine;
It was not you that knew this and approved;
I pray you swear it.

Murray. You are lesser than a child
That, being as simple, yet by innocence
Exceeds you naturally. What cause have I
Or power to wrong you? what good thing of yours
Should I desire to strip from you and wear,
What gold or grace to gird myself withal
And stand up clad in thievish ornament
To take your place thrust out? Conspiracy
Should have some gain for warrant of itself,
With vantage of some purpose; none lays wait
To slay or steal save what may profit him;
So sit you safe enough.

Darnley. I shall not see her?

Murray. If you will be well counselled, no; her mood
Is hard and keener since your child was born,

And she, new-risen from childbed, hither came
To taste the savour and sweetness of the sea,
I think, with no mind you should follow her;
Nor am myself, howbeit you hold me hers,
And of one counsel to put down your hopes,
More near her favour; one man's eye alone
Sees her face favourable, one only ear
Hears her speak soft; if he be friend of mine,
You know as I know.

Darnley. Why, ye are reconciled;
I have heard what care she had to appease both parts,
When you before her face had braved him, saying,
Ere he reft Maitland's forfeit land and state
Some score as honourable as he should die,
And she had cast herself across your wrath
With reconciling passion; ay, my lord,
Take note we are not so dull of ear or brain
But we hear word of you and understand
The traitors that ye all are, all, to me,
The false heart and the lying lips that serve
The murderous meaning of your will, and hers
The first and worst. What, will ye have my life?
Is it my helpless blood that she would take
To serve for christening water to her child,
And for the font no gift of English gold
Though bright and hollow and void as English love,
But the strait coffin, the vile shell of death,
That hides and bears me graveward? but I live,
To save myself and to revenge I live,
And will not die for all you.

Enter the QUEEN *and* BOTHWELL.

Queen. What is this
That makes such wrathful or such woful war
Even on our ears, and here? We bade you not
Come brawl before us like a groom, and break
Our breath of peace with cries of contumely.
Here is not room enough for rioters' threats
To ring through and return; in Edinburgh
You have leave to brawl and wail and swear and cry,
Feed where you list, and love; here I would rest,
With thus much leave yet by your gracious grant,
That I may somewhile sit apart, and think
What man I have to husband.

Darnley. I will go:
I would I had not come between your eyes
Nor now nor ever.

Queen. Then they had never learnt
What makes or makes not man worth looking on.

Darnley. Am I not worth your eye?

Queen. I pray, go back;
I would not say what you are worth or no.

Darnley. I am yet worth two bastards; and this man,
If he shall do me less than right, by heaven,
Shall wear the proof upon him.

Murray. Sir, your words
Are as swords drawn of drunkards' hands, which first
Feel their edge bite; me can they make not shrink,
You they may pierce, and slay your own good name,
If any man be that gives ear to you.

Darnley. You will not fight with me?
Queen. What, in our face?
Hath fear gone after shame?
Murray. Let him pass hence;
He hath said truth once; we shall not fight.
Queen. I charge you
Make straight atonement; else, though shame be dead,
I will find means to raise up fear alive.
Darnley. Nay, I spake hot and hastily; my lord,
You know I bear no bitter heart toward you;
I am more of quick tongue than of evil will.
Murray. Sir, so I hold you.
Darnley. So you do but right.
Nor will I stay to chafe your majesty
That has all power to bid me to and fro,
Who yet was called your lord once of the priest,
And am no lord but servant. [*Exit.*
Queen. Said you, once?
Not once but twice he hath spoken truth to-day.
Yet sits it strange upon his lips.
Murray. I would
He had come not hither, or you not bidden him back.
Queen. What, should he stay? Fair brother, wot you well,
I had rather touch in the dark a serpent's flesh
And with its body and breath confound mine own
Than with his breath and body. Never more,
By Mary Virgin, while these limbs are mine
And these my living lips, never will I
Pollute myself with him; by kiss nor touch

Shall ever he defile me. Nay too, see,
(You have not seen) what privacies he hath
With what strange friends ; here have I to my hand
Letters of his to Philip and the Pope,
That they should know I am slacker toward the faith
Than Rome would have me, or Spain ; he swears I am
cold,
I have cast off care (God wot) to serve the church,
And he it is, my lord, being strong in faith,
Expounds mine unfaith to them.

Bothwell. Hath he sworn
To sleep for their sakes in a naked grave?
If this were blown among the popular folk
Scant time there were to sew his shroud, I ween,
Ere earth were shed upon him.

Murray. Ay, but, sir,
They must not know it ; it were not well they knew ;
Nor shall it be put forth among them.

Bothwell. No !
It shall not?

Murray. By my will it shall not be.

Bothwell. His will ! and shall not ! Is it queen or king
That holds the rod of rule in Scotland here?
Madam, what says your sometime majesty
Of such a kingly will? since, for your own,
It has no power, it shall not fight with his,
Shall not have way, nor shall not be at all,
Except it swim with his will.

Murray. This is nought.

Bothwell. Yea truly, nought shall be this will of
yours,

This potent will that shall not tread us down;
Yea, what you will or will not, all is nought,
Nought as your name, or title to bear rule
Within the realm possessed more royally.

Murray. 'Tis not a score as big-voiced men as this
Shall make me weak with wagging of their tongues
That I should loose what lies into my hand.
Madam, what faith I bear you and goodwill,
If that you know not, let the time and proof,
Not mine own lips, be witness; in this realm
I have some power to serve you, by no craft
Unjustly purchased nor by force of hand
Won masterfully: and for God's love and yours
That which I may I will do to keep fair
In the open eye of all men your good name
And power which if that name be blown against
With windy whispers of ill-minded folk,
Or such as see your marriage-bed lie cold
And know not wherefore, dies out of your hand
And is no more for ever. Therefore is it
I would not the worst cause of strife you have
Were opened to the people; for himself,
You know if ever love between us were
Since first I fell under your stroke of wrath
For his sole sake, whose match then made with you
I would betimes have broken, but being made
Would not now see rent shamefully in twain
That men should speak you wrong.

Queen. You are honourable;

But yet the whole worst cause you know not of,
That even his father Lennox writes me here
Letters to put the charge thereof away
And clear himself of fellowship therein,
Assuring his own honesty, albeit
His word is worthless with his son my lord
And his name held not as a father's name.
This letter will I lay before the lords
That they may see what manner of cause he hath
To plead against us with what likelihood,
When his own father shall forswear his cause.
I am assured he hath set his lewd light mind,
Out of what fear I know not or what shame,
To flee forth of the kingdom and take ship
For the islands westward of that southern cape
Where the out-thrust heel of England cleaves the sea—
But God knows how to live there, if by spoil
Or what base mean of life; only thus much
In parley with the French ambassador
He hath avowed, and wept to tell of wrongs
That as he swears have driven him down to this.

Murray. He is a fool, and vile; yet let not him
Be the more dangerous to you even for this,
That he is vile and foolish; there should be
Wise means to curb and chain the fool in him
Without the scandal of the full-mouthed world.

Queen. Such have I sought; and presently I think
To have him brought again in Edinburgh
Before the lords in council, even those men
Who stood in arms against him with yourself

When first there grew debate upon our match
(Which I could pray now with too tardy tongue
That God had given you force to break indeed),
And were of counsel with him afterward
In David's bloodshed, and betrayed of him
Into mine hand again for perfect fear,
Fear and false heart ; even before these, I say,
Whose threefold memory of him so must knit
Their hearts to his, there shall he plead, and say
If he have aught against me blameworthy,
Or what he would ; so shall he be displayed
And we in the eyes of all men justified
That simply deal with him and honourably,
Not as by cunning or imperious hand,
But plain as with an equal.

Bothwell. By my head,
Your counsel, madam, is more than man's poor wit.

Murray. It may do well : would all were well indeed !
I see no clearer way than this of yours
Nor of more peaceful promise. I will go
To bid my friends together of the lords
Who will be counselled of me, and to show
Your purpose righteous : so I take my leave. [*Exit.*

Queen. Is not that light red oversea ?

Bothwell. Blood-red.

Queen. The wind has fallen ; but there the cloud come up ;
We shall not sail to-day.

Bothwell. No ; here will be

No woman's weather.

Queen. Yet I had in mind
Either to sail or drive the deer to-day.
I fear not so much rainfall or sea-drift
That I should care to house and hide my head.
I never loved the windless weather, nor
The dead face of the water in the sun ;
I had rather the live wave leapt under me,
And fits of foa n struck light on the dark air,
And the sea's kiss were keen upon my lip
And bold as love's and bitter ; then my soul
Is a wave too that springs against the light
And beats and bursts with one great strain of joy
As the sea breaking. You said well ; this light
Is like shed blood spilt here by drops and there
That overflows the red brims of the cloud
And stains the moving water : yet the waves
Pass, and the spilt light of the broken sun
Rests not upon them but a minute's space ;
No longer should a deed, methinks, once done
Endure upon the life of memory
To stain the days thereafter with remorse
And mar the better seasons.

Bothwell. So think I.

Queen. If I were man I would be man like you.

Bothwell. What then ?

Queen. And being so loved as you of me,
I would make use of love, and in good time
Put the scythe to it and reap ; it should not rot
As corn ungarnered, it should bring forth bread
And fruit of life to strengthen me : but, mark,

Who would eat bread must earn bread : would you be King?

Bothwell. Nay, but servant ever to my queen.

Queen. Let us go forth ; the evening will be fair.

SCENE VII.—EDINBURGH. THE PARLIAMENT-HOUSE.

The QUEEN *seated in state ; near her* DU CROC *and* MURRAY ; DARNLEY *in front, as at his arraignment ; on the one side the Lords of the Congregation ; on the other those of the Queen's party,* BOTHWELL, HUNTLEY, CAITHNESS, ATHOL, *and the* ARCHBISHOP *of* ST. ANDREW'S.

Queen. My lords, ye hear by his own word of hand
How fair and loyally our father writes,
To purge his name that had indeed no soil
Of any blame to usward ; though he have
No power upon our wedded lord his son
To heal his heart's disease of discontent :
Which, for myself, before God's face and yours
I do protest I know not what thing done
Hath in my lord begotten or brought forth,
Nor of what ill he should complain in me.
Nay, here in very faith and humbleness
I turn me to him and with clasped hands beseech
That he would speak even all his mind of me,
In what thing ever I have given my lord offence,
And if before him I stand blameworthy
Would lay my blame for burden on my head
In this high presence ; which to bear shall be
At once for penance and instruction to me
Who know not yet my lightest fault by name.

Ochiltree. So would we all be certified of you,
Sir, that your cause may stand forth visibly
And men take cognizance of it who see
Nor root nor fruit now of your discontent;
We pray you then make answer to the queen.

Du Croc. My lord, you have held me for a friend, and laid
A friend's trust on me; for that honour's sake
For which I am bounden to you, give me now
But leave to entreat you in all faith of heart
Dishonour not yourself nor this great queen
By speech or silence with a show of shame;
Let it be seen shame hath no portion here,
But honour only and reconciled remorse
That pours its bitter balm into the wound
Of love somewhile divided from itself
And makes it whole; I pray you, be it so now.

Queen. An honourable petition, my good lord,
And one that comes reverberate from my heart.

Darnley. I will not stand the question. Are ye set
To bait me like a bondslave? Sirs, I think
There is no worthier man of you than I,
Whom ye would chide and bait and mock; howbeit,
Ye shall not wring out of my smitten lips,
As from a child's ye scourge till he speak truth,
One word I would not; rather being thus used
I will go forth the free man that I came,
No nobler, but as noble. For your grace,
I have stood too near you now to fall behind
And stand far back with vassal hat plucked off

To bow at bidding; therefore with free soul
For a long time I take farewell and go,
Commending you to God; and if as seems
I was or nought or grievous in your eye,
It shall not take offence this many a day
At this that here offends it. So I have done;
Enough said is said well.

Bothwell (*aside to the Queen*). I never saw
Such heart yet in the fool. Madam, speak now;
I wot he hath made a beard or two of them
Nod favourably.

Queen. What should I say? not I.

Bothwell. Speak to the ambassador; bid him take heed
This feather fly not shipward, and be blown
Out of our hand; speak to him.

Queen. Have no such fear;
He will not fly past arm's length; the French lord
Will hold him safe unbidden. Look, they talk.

Bothwell. And yet I would he had spoken not so high.
I did not think but he would bend, and mourn
Like a boy beaten.

Queen. With what sorrow of heart,
My lords, we have heard such strange and harsh reply
To our good words and meaning, none of you
But must be as ourself to know it well.
But since nor kindliness nor humble speech
Nor honest heart of love can so prevail
Against the soul of such inveteracy,

But wilful mind will make itself more hard
Than modesty and womanhood are soft
Or gentleness can speak it fair, we have not
One other tear to weep thereon for shame.
So without answer, yea, no word vouchsafed,
As all ye witness, no complaint, no cause,
No reason shown, but all put off in wrath,—
I would not say, ourself in you, my lords,
Mocked with defiance,—it were but a scorn
To hold our session further. Thus in grief
Will we fare hence and take of you farewell,
Being southward bounden, as ye know, to hear
At Jedburgh what complaint of wrong there is
Between our own folk and the bordering men,
Whose wardens of the English side have wrought us
Fresh wrong but late; and our good warden here
Shall go before us to prepare our way.

SCENE VIII.—HERMITAGE CASTLE.

The QUEEN *and* BOTHWELL.

Bothwell. I did not think you could have rid so fast.

Queen. There is no love in you to lift your heart,
Nor heart to lift the fleshly weight, and bear
Forward: I struck my love even as a spur
Into the tired side of my horse, and made it
Leap like a flame that eats up all its way
Till I were here.

Bothwell. Why came you not before?

Queen. What, am I now too slow?

Bothwell. Ay, though you rode
Beyond the sun's speed, yea, the race of time
That runs down all men born. Forgive it me
That I was wroth and weary for your love,
Here lying alone, out of your eyes; I could not
But chafe and curse, sending my spirit forth
From this maimed flesh yet halting with its wound
To move about you like a thought, and bring me
Word of your works and ways.

Queen. I could not come.

Bothwell. Was there so much work worthier to be done
Than this, to give love and to take again
Thus? but for my part, of all things in the world
I hold this best, to love you; and I think
God never made your like for man to love.

Queen. You are my soldier; but these silk-soft words
Become your lips as well as mine, when love
Rekindles them; how good it is to have
A man to love you! here is man indeed,
Not fool or boy, to make love's face ashamed,
To abash love's heart and turn to bitterness
The sweet blood current in it. O my fair lord!
How fairer is this warrior face, and eyes
With the iron light of battle in them left
As the after fire of sunset left in heaven
When the sun sinks, than any fool's face made
Of smiles and courtly colour! Now I feel
As I were man too, and had part myself

In your great strength; being one with you as I,
How should not I be strong? It is your deed,
By grace of you and influence, sir, it is
That I fear nothing; how should I lift up
Mine eyes to your eyes, O my light o' the war,
And dare be fearful? yours but looked upon,
Though mine were timorous as a dove's affrayed,
For very shame would give them heart, and fire
To meet the eyes of danger. What were I
To have your love and love you, and yet be
No more than women are whose name is fear
And their hearts bloodless—I, who am part of you,
That have your love for heart's blood? Shall I think
The blood you gave me fighting for my sake
Has entered in my veins and grown in me
To fill me with you? O, my lord, my king,
Love me! I think you cannot love me yet,
That have done nought nor borne for love of you;
But by the eye's light of all-judging God
That if I lie shall burn my soul in hell,
There is not in this fierce world anything,
Scorn, agony, stripes, bonds, fears, woes, deep shame,
Kingdomless ruin, but with open hands,
With joyous bosom open as to love,
Yea, with soul thankful for its great delight
And life on fire with joy, for this love's sake
I would embrace and take it to my heart.

Bothwell. Why, there should need not this to love you well;
What should you have to bear for me, my queen,

Or how should I more love you? Nay, sweet, peace,
Let not your passion break you; your breast burns,
Your very lips taste bitter with your tears.

Queen. It is because—O God that pities us!—
I may not always lie thus, may not kneel,
Cling round your hands and feet, or with shut eyes
Wait till your lips be fast upon my face,
And laugh with very love intolerable
As I laugh now—look, now I do not weep,
I am not sad nor angered against heaven
That ever he divides us; I am glad
That yet I have mine hour. Sweet, do not speak,
Nor do not kiss me; let mine eyes but rest
In the love's light of yours, and for a space
My heart lie still, late drunken with love's wine,
And feel the fierce fumes lessen and go out
And leave it healed. O, I have bled for you
The nearest inward blood that is my life
Drop by drop inly, till my swooning heart
Made my face pale—I should look green and wan
If by heart's sickness and blood-wasting pain
The face be changed indeed; for all these days
Your wound bled in me, and your face far off
Was as a moving fire before mine eyes
That might not come to see you; I was dead,
And yet had breath enough, speech, hearing, sight,
To feel them strange and insupportable;
I know now how men live without a heart.
Does your wound pain you?

Bothwell. What, I have a wound?

Queen. How should one love enough, though she gave all,
Who had your like to love? I pray you tell me,
How did you fight?
Bothwell. Why, what were this to tell?
I caught this reiver, by some chance of God,
That put his death into mine hand, alone,
And charged him; foot to foot we fought some space,
And he fought well; a gallant knave, God wot,
And worth a sword for better soldier's work
Than these thieves' brawls; I would have given him life
To ride among mine own men here and serve,
But he would nought; so being sore hurt i' the thigh
I pushed upon him suddenly, and clove
His crown through to the chin.
Queen. I will not have you
Henceforth for warden of these borders, sir:
We have hands enow for that and heads to cleave
That but their wives will weep for.
Bothwell. Have no fear;
This hour had healed me of more grievous wounds;
When it shall please you sign me to your side,
Think I am with you.
Queen. I must ride—woe's me!
The hour is out. Be not long from me, love;
And till you come, I swear by your own head
I will not see the thing that was my lord
Though he came in to Jedburgh. I had thought
To have spoken of him, but my lips were loth

To mar with harsh intrusion of his name
The least of all our kisses. Let him be;
We shall have time. How fair this castle stands!
These hills are greener, and that singing stream
Sings sweeter, and the fields are brighter faced,
Than I have seen or heard; and these good walls
That keep the line of kingdom, all my life
I shall have mind of them to love them well.
Nay, yet I must to horse.

Bothwell. Ay must you, sweet;
If you will ride thus fifty mile a day,
But for your face you should be man indeed.

Queen. But for my face?

Bothwell. If you will make me mad——

Queen. I dare not dwell with madmen; sir, farewell.

Bothwell. But for your love and for its cruelty,
I would have said, you should be man.

Queen. Alas!
But for my love? nay, now you speak but truth;
For I well knew there was no love in man.
But we grow idle in this our labouring time;
When we have wrought through all the heat o' the day,
We may play then unblamed, and fear no hand
To push us each from other; now farewell.

SCENE IX.—THE QUEEN'S LODGING AT JEDBURGH.

The three MARIES.

Mary Carmichael. What, will she die? how says this doctor now?

Mary Seyton. He thinks by chafing of her bloodless limbs
To quicken the numbed life to sense again
That is as death now in her veins; but surely
I think the very spirit and sustenance
That keeps the life up current in the blood
Has left her as an empty house for death,
Entering, to take and hold it.

Mary Beaton. I say, no;
She will not die of chance or weariness;
This fever caught of riding and hot haste
Being once burnt out, as else nought ails her, will not
Leave her strength tainted; she is manly made,
And good of heart; and even by this her brain,
We see, begins to settle; she will live.

Mary Carmichael. Pray God she may, and no time worse than this
Come through her death on us and all her land
Left lordless for men's swords to carve and share;
Pray God she die not.

Mary Beaton. From my heart, amen!
God knows and you if I would have her die.

Mary Seyton. Would you give up your loving life for hers?

Mary Beaton. I shall not die before her; nor, I think,
Live long when she shall live not.

Mary Seyton. A strange faith:
Who put this confidence in you? or is it
But love that so assures you to keep life

While she shall keep, and lose when she shall lose
For very love's sake?

Mary Beaton. This I cannot tell,
Whence I do know it; but that I know it I know,
And by no casual or conjectural proof
Not yet by test of reason; but I know it
Even as I know I breathe, see, hear, feed, speak,
And am not dead and senseless of the sun
That yet I look on: so assuredly
I know I shall not die till she be dead.
Look, she is risen.

Enter the QUEEN, *supported by attendants.*

Queen. What word was in your lips?
That I must die?

Mary Seyton. Heaven hath not such hard heart.

Queen. I think I shall not, surely, by God's grace;
Yet no man knows of God when he will bring
His hour upon him. I am sick and weak.
And yet unsure if I be whole of mind.
I think I have been estranged from my right wits
These some days back; I know not. Prithee tell me,
Have I not slept? I know you who you are;
You were about me thus in our first days,
When days and nights were roseleaves that fell off
Without a wind or taint of chafing air
But passed with perfume from us, and their death
Had on it still the tender dew of birth.
We were so near the sweet warm wells of life
We lay and laughed in bosom of the dawn

And knew not if the noon had heat to burn
Or the evening rain to smite us; being grown tall,
Our heads were raised more near the fires of heaven
And bitter strength of storms; then we were glad,
Ay, glad and good. Is there yet one of you
Keeps in her mind what hovers now in mine,
That sweet strait span of islanded green ground
Where we played once, and set us flowers that died
Before even our delight in them was dead?
Now we are old, delights are first to die
Before the things that breed them.

Mary Seyton (*aside*). She roams yet.

Mary Beaton. I do remember.

Queen. Yea, I knew it; one day
We wrangled for a rose' sake and fell out
With tears and words protesting each 'twas she,
She 'twas that set it; and for very wrath
I plucked up my French lilies and set foot
On their gold heads, because you had chafed me, saying
Those were her flowers who should be queen in France,
And leave you being no queen your Scottish rose
With simpler leaves ungilt and innocent
That smelt of homelier air; and I mind well
I rent the rose out of your hand and cast
Upon the river's running; and a thorn
Pierced through mine own hand, and I wept not then,
But laughed for anger at you and glad heart
To have made you weep, being worsted. What light
things
Come back to the light brain that sickness shakes

And makes the heaviest thought that it can hold
No heavier than a leaf, or gossamer
That seems to link two leaves a minute, then
A breath unlinks them ; so my thoughts are : nay,
And should not so ; it may be I shall die,
And as a fool I would not pass away
With babbling lips unpurged and graceless heart
Unreconciled to mercy. Let me see
That holy lord I bade be not far off
While I lay sick—I have not here his name—
My head is tired, yet have I strength at heart
To say one word shall make me friends with God,
Commending to him in the hour of unripe death
The spirit so rent untimely from its house
And ere the natural night lay hold on it
Darkly divided from the light of life.
Pray him come to me.

Mary Beaton. It is my lord of Ross
The queen would see? my lord is at her hand.

Enter the BISHOP OF ROSS.

Queen. Most reverend father, my soul's friend, you see
How little queenlike I sit here at wait
Till God lay hand on me for life or death,
With pain for that gold garland of my head
Men call a crown, and for my body's robe
Am girt with mortal sickness : I would fain,
Before I set my face to look on death,
Mine eyes against his eyes, make straight the way

My soul must travel with this flesh put off
At the dark door; I pray you for God's grace
Give me that holy help that is in you
To lighten my last passage out of sight.
For this world's works, I have done with them this day,
With mine own lips while yet their breath was warm
Commending to my lords the natural charge
Of their born king, and by my brother's mouth
To the English queen the wardship of her heir,
And by the ambassador's of France again
To his good mistress and my brother king
The care of mine unmothered child, who has
No better friends bequeathable than these:
And for this land have I besought them all,
Who may beseech of no man aught again,
That here may no man for his faith be wronged
Whose faith is one with mine that all my life
I have kept, and fear not in it now to die.

Bishop of Ross. Madam, what comfort God hath given his priests
To give again, what stay of spirit and strength
May through their mean stablish the souls of men
To live or die unvexed of life or death,
Unwounded of the fear and fang of hell,
Doubt not to have; seeing though no man be good
But one is good, even God, yet in his eye
The man that keeps faith sealed upon his soul
Shall through the bloodshedding of Christ be clean.
And in this time of cursing and flawed faith
Have you kept faith unflawed, and on your head
The immediate blessing of the spouse of God.

Have no fear therefore but your sins of life,
Or stains and shadows such as all men take,
In this world's passage, from the touch of time,
Shall fall from off you as a vesture changed
And leave your soul for whiteness as a child's.

Queen. I would have absolution ere I die,
But of what sins I have not strength to say
Nor hardly to remember. I do think
I have done God some service, holding fast
Faith, and his Church's fear; and have loved well
His name and burden set on me to serve,
To bear his part in the eye of this thwart world
And witness of his cross; yet know myself
To be but as a servant without grace
Save of his lord's love's gift; I have sinned in pride,
Perchance, to be his servant first and fight,
In face of all men's hate and might, alone,
Here sitting single-sceptred, and compel
For all its many-mouthed inveteracy
The world with bit and bridle like a beast
Brought back to serve him, and bound down to me
Whose hand should take and hale it by the mane
And bend its head to worship as I bade,
I, first among his faithful; so I said,
And foolishly; for I was high of heart;
And now, behold, I am in God's sight and man's
Nothing; but though I have not so much grace
To bind again this people fast to God,
I have held mine own faith fast and with my lips
Have borne him witness if my heart were whole.

Bishop of Ross. Therefore shall he forget not in your hour
Nor for his child reject you; and shall make
The weight and colour of your sins on earth
More white and light than wool may be or snow.

Queen. Yea, so my trust is of him; though as now
Scarce having in me breath or spirit of speech
I make not long confession, and my words
Through faintness of my flesh lack form; yet, pray you,
Think it but sickness and my body's fault
That comes between me and my will, who fain
Would have your eye look on my naked soul
And read what writing there should be washed out
With mine own heart's tears, and with God's dear blood,
Who sees me for his penitent; for surely
My sins of wrath and of light-mindedness,
And waste of wanton will and wandering eyes,
Call on me with dumb tongues for penitence;
Which I beseech you let not God reject
For lack of words that I lack strength to say.
For here as I repent and put from me
In perfect hope of pardon all ill thoughts,
So I remit all faults against me done,
Forgive all evil toward me of all men,
Deed or device to hurt me; yea, I would not
There were one heart unreconciled with mine
When mine is cold; I will not take death's hand
With any soil of hate or wrath or wrong
About me, but being friends with this past world
Pass from it in the general peace of love.

Mary Beaton. Here is some message from the world of friends
Brought to your brother : shall my lord come in ?

Queen. What lord ? ye have no lord of any man
While I am lady of all you. Who is this ?
Message ? what message ? whence ?

Enter MURRAY.

Murray. From Edinburgh
Your husband new alighted in sharp speed
Craves leave of access to your majesty.

Queen. By heaven, I had rather death had leave than he.
What comes he for ? to vex me quick or dead
With his lewd eyes and sodden sidelong face
That I may die again with loathing of him ?
By God, as God shall look upon my soul,
I will not see him. Bid him away, and keep
Far off as Edinburgh may hold him hence
Among his fellows of the herded swine
That not for need but love he wallows with
To expend his patrimony of breath and blood
In the dear service of dishonouring days.

Murray. Let him but bide the night here.

Queen. Not an hour ;
Not while his horse may breathe. I will not see him.

Murray. Nay, for the world's sake, and lest worse be said ;
Let him sleep here and come not in your sight.

Queen. Unless by some mean I be freed of him

I have no pleasure upon earth to live.
I will put hand to it first myself. My lord,
See how this ill man's coming shakes my soul
And stains its thoughts with passionate earth again
That were as holy water, white and sweet,
For my rechristening; I could weep with wrath
To find between my very prayer and God
His face thrust like a shameful thought in sleep.
I cannot pray nor fix myself on heaven
But he must loose my hold, break up my trust,
Unbind my settled senses, and pluck down
My builded house of hope. Would he were dead
That puts my soul out of its peace with God.
Comfort me, father; let him not have way;
Keep my soul for me safe and full of heaven
As it was late.—See that you rid him hence,
I charge you, sir, with morning.

Murray. Yea, I shall;
'Twere best he saw you not.

Queen. I think so. Hark!
Who is there lighted after him? I heard—
Nay, he is sick yet, wounded; yet I heard—
Pray God he be not risen too soon, to ride
With his wound's danger for my sickness' sake.

Mary Beaton. It is my lord the warden.

Queen. What, I knew it—
So soon so far, and with such speed! ay, never
Had queen so ill befriended of her own
So fast a friend and loving. I will see him;
I am stronger than I was. Give me your hands;

I can stand upright surely. Come you in
And help to attire me like a living queen;
These are as grave-clothes. One go bring me word
How he looks now, if weak or well indeed,
If stout of cheer or tired. Say, for his coming
And care unbidden of me, I thank him not
If he have done his own wound hurt thereby.
I will but rest, and see him: bring me in. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE X.—CRAIGMILLAR.

The QUEEN, MURRAY, BOTHWELL, MAITLAND, HUNTLEY, *and* ARGYLE.

Queen. If it must be, or all without it break,
I am content to have Lord Morton home;
Nay, all of them ye will, save two I keep
To be the food of justice and my wrath,
Now hunger-starven; his red hand who set
To my child-burdened breast the iron death,
And the uncle of my caitiff; they shall bleed,
As Ruthven should, but for death's hastier hand
That plucked him up before me: for his son,
Let him come back too.

Maitland. It is nobly judged,
And shall content the lords and land alike
With such good counsel and such fair consent
To see your highness moved to rid yourself
Of their disease and yours, with all men's will
Purged from you by the readiest mean we may.

Queen. Ay, by divorce: I have then your tongues to that,
Yours, both my friends now that were ill friends once
But handfast here in common faith to me
And equal-hearted; and my brother's voice,
Joined with these good lords present: but you said,
Was it not you said, sir, that by divorce,
Though leave were given of them that might withhold,
And the priest's word that bound unbound us, yet
Some soil might fall from lips of evil will
On our son's birth-name?

Maitland. Yea, from ill men's mouths
And all that hate you such rebuke might fall,
Which were foul shame to suffer and be dumb,
Though made by your divorce unanswerable.

Queen. In sooth, I thought so; and howbeit yourself,
My lord of Bothwell, by the judgment given
That loosed your mother's from your father's hand
Stood undespoiled in fair inheritance,
It may be where the cast is of a crown,
And such a crown as in contention shakes
Two several-storied kingdoms, even the chance
Should stand not questionable, and friend nor foe
Have word to throw against it.

Maitland. So I said.

Bothwell. Yet must the queen be freed; and for the fear
Lest England for his sake be moved, I know not
What hold it has upon us, who but now
Saw what good heart and loyal will they bear

To the right heirship of your majesty
Who bide on our south border, when their guns
From Berwick hailed you passing hither, and made
The loud-mouthed crags cry to their batteries back,
And tell the sundering Tweed and all green hills,
And all the clamorous concourse of the sea,
The name that had the lordship of both lands
In heritage to bind them fast in one.
There heart and tongue outspake of the true north
That for his caitiff sake should not be moved
Nor alter from its faith though he were cast,
With haltered throat or millstone round his neck,
From a queen's bed into the naked sea.

Maitland. Madam, we are here for service of your grace,
Chief of your council and nobility:
We shall find mean whereby without wrong done
To your son's title, you shall well be quit
Of your ill-minded husband; and albeit
My lord of Murray present here be one
As scrupulous of his faith a Protestant
As is your grace a Papist, he will look
As through his fingers on the work we do
And say no word, I am well assured, of all
His eye may wink on.

Queen. Nay, I cannot tell;
I would not have mine honour touched, nor buy
My peace with hurt of conscience; being so wise
As silence proves you or as speech proclaims,
Ye shall do well to let this be; perchance

The good ye mean me being untimely done
Might turn to my displeasure, and your hands
Leave me more hurt than holpen.

Murray. You say well;
For none but honourable and lawful ends
Have I desired this council, to procure
Your just and honest freedom, and repeal
The banished Morton, whose advice thereto
Shall not be fruitless; for no further aim
To no strange mean have I put hand. Farewell. [*Exit.*

Argyle. He will not know of us enough to thwart;
And so not least may serve us; but if here
These hands whose help would hurt you not be set
To such a bond as may put forth our cause
And bind us to sustain it with one soul,
Shall they more hurt than help you?

Queen. Nay, ye are wise:
I know not; but I think your helpful hands
Could not be set but to my service.

Huntley. Then
Should we set down what reason of resolve
We have to make it manifest and sure
That this young fool and tyrant by our will
Shall bear no rule among us, and thereto
For divers causes shall he be put forth
One way or other, and what man soe'er
Shall take this deed in hand or do it, all we
Shall as our own and general act of all
Defend and fortify it.

Queen. Must all set hands

To one same bond for warrant?

Bothwell. Who should fail?
Not we that shall devise it, nor Balfour,
My kinsman here and friend.

Queen. Must you sign too?

Bothwell. How must I not? am I not fit to serve
As being or coward or faithless or a fool,
Or all or any? or what misdoubt of yours
Should wash my writing out or blur my name?
What faith a faithful servant of his hands
May freely challenge of the king they serve,
So much I challenge of your majesty.

Queen. Nay, my fair lord, but for your known faith's sake
And constant service the less need it were
To have your hand here on our side; lest men
Should lay the deed but on mine ancient friends,
Whose names not all men love yet for my sake,
And call it but our privy plot and hate
Which is the judgment of all wisest lords
And equal sentence of the general land.

Maitland. So we that were not counted with your friends
Should bear the whole deed and its danger up,
We whom you have loved not, madam, for the stand
We made against the perilous loves and hates
That loosened half your people's love from you.
Yet must we have his hand too.

Bothwell. Ay, and shall.
I wear no glove when hands are bared to strike.

Queen. Be it as you will; I am nothing in your count;
So be it; my council shall not cumber you.
Do all ye list.

Maitland. And all that shall be done
Will be the more strength to your majesty
And comfort to your cause: which now we go
With all our help to hearten.

Queen. Go, and thrive.

[*Exeunt* MAITLAND, HUNTLEY, *and* ARGYLE.

I would we had no need of such men's tongues.

Bothwell. He has the wisest name on all their side;
And by the tether that holds fast his faith
We lead their lesser wits what way we will.
Sharp-spirited is he surely, deep of soul,
Cunning and fearless; one that gives, men say,
Small heed or honour to their faiths or fears
And breath of holy custom; undistraught
By doubt of God's hand paddling in our clay
Or dream of God's eye slanted on our sin;
As one that holds more worthily of God,
—Or would not hold at all—whate'er he be,
Than of a sidelong scrupulous overseer
That pries askance upon our piteous lives
To judge of this and this, how ill or well,
And mark souls white or black with coal or chalk
For crowning or for burning, palms or fires;
One therefore that through all shut ways of life
Lets his soul range, even like the all-winnowing wind,
And ply her craft in all life's businesses
Not like a blind man burdened; sure of hand

And great of counsel, like an under fire
That works in the earth and makes its breach by night
And leaps a league's length at the first stride forth
Of its free foot, blackening the face of men;
So strong and keen and secret is his soul.

Queen. So he keep trust, I care not if his creed
Be faced or lined with craft and atheism,
His soul be close or open; but what bond
Shall bind him ours so sure that fraud nor force
May serve against us more?

Bothwell. Doubt me not that;
By hilt, not edge, we hold him as a sword
That in our hand shall bend not till we break,
If we would break it when our work is done.

Queen. Have we the strength? I doubt not of this hand,
That holds my heart, if it be strong or no,
More than I doubt of the eyes that light mine eyes,
The lips that my lips breathe by—O my life,
More than I doubt of mine own bitter love,
More than of death's no power to sunder us,
Of his no force to quench me who am fire,
Fire for your sake, that would put all these out
To shine and lighten in your sight alone
For warmth and comfort, being to all eyes beside
Or fear or ruin more fleet of foot than fear.
I would I had on breast or hand or brow
In crown or clasp the whole gold wrought of the earth,
In one keen jewel the store of all the sea,
That I might throw down at your hand or foot

Sea, land, and all that in them is of price,
Or in the strong wine of my piercing love
Melt the sole pearl of the earth, and drink dissolved
The cost of all the world's worth.

Bothwell. Yea, my queen?
Have then no fear what man shall deem or do;
For by this fire and light of you I swear
That is my sunlight and my fire of day
We shall not walk as they that walk by night
Toward our great goal uncertainly, nor swerve
Till we strike foot against it. Kiss me now,
And bid me too speed on my way with them
To bring back all their hands here to the bond
Set fast as mine, or as your heart is fast
Set on his death whose life lies nigh burnt out,
Half brand half ash already in the heat
Of that bright wrath which makes as red as flame
Your fearful and sweet splendour; nay, by heaven,
It flushes all the light about your face
With seven times kindled colour of pure fire,
And burns mine eyes beholding, as your lips
And quick breath burn me kissing. My sweet fear,
Had you not been the sweetest, even to me
You must have been the fearfullest thing alive.

Queen. For love is so, and I am very love,
And no more queen or woman; have no heart,
No head, no spirit or sense at all of life,
Save as of love that lives and that is I,
I that was woman, and bore rule alone
Upon myself; who am all diskingdomed now,

Made twice a slave, mine own soul's thrall and yours
Who wield the heart that wields me at your will.
I can but do as wills the spirit in me
Which is your spirit's servant. Ah, my lord,
My one lord every way, my poor heart's blood,
Breath of my lips and eyesight of mine eyes,
How did I live the life that loved you not?
What were those days wherein I walked apart
And went my way and did my will alone
And thought and wrought without you in the world?
Then I did evil and folly; the more need
I purge me now and perfect my desire,
Which is to be no more your lover, no,
But even yourself, yea more than body and soul,
One and not twain, one utter life, one fire,
One will, one doom, one deed, one spirit, one God;
For we twain grown and molten each in each
Surely shall be as God is and no man.

Bothwell. God speed us then till we grow up to God!
Me first, who first shall clear our way to climb
By carving one weed's earthly coil away
That cumbers our straight growing: pray for me!
I will have all their hands to it in an hour.

SCENE XI.—COURTYARD OF A HOSTELRY AT WHITTINGHAM.

BOTHWELL *and* MORTON.

Morton. Fled in pure fear of me? well, he knows best.
Towards Glasgow, said you?

Bothwell. Soon as came the word
You were brought home with welcome of the queen,
He spurs from Stirling with all heat of speed
Even from her arms new-reconciled and face
That favourably had received him; leaves the feast
Half made and his unchristened yeanling there
Not yet signed God's and dewy from the font
Long waited for, till the English golden gift
Was grown too strait to hold and hallow him;
Flies from all sight and cheer of festal folk,
And on the way being smitten sick with fear
Cries out of poison working in his flesh
Blue-spotted as with ulcerous pestilence,
Weeps himself dead and wails himself alive,
As now he lies, but bedrid; and has lain
This Christmas through, while the queen held her feast
At Drummond Castle.

Morton. Yea, I heard so; and you
At Tullibardine likewise, or men lie,
Kept the feast high beside her. Well, my lord,
Now have you time and room to say for each
What ye would have of me, the queen and you,
Who are hand and tongue at once of her design;
Here am I newly lighted, hot from horse,
But fresh come forth of exile and ill days
To do you service; let me have her hand
For warrant of what dangerous work she will,
And mine is armed to do it; but till I have,
Expect of me, who have seen times strange as this,
Nothing.

Bothwell. I have her warrant in my lips;
By me she speaks you safe in serving her.
Morton. Let that secure yourself; I must have proofs.
Bothwell. You shall have all, and written; but your hand
Must be in this with ours.
Morton. I have cause enough,
Good reason and good will to see it performed;
But will not strike through mine own side at him.
Make your mind sure of that.
Bothwell. Well, you shall have it;
Myself will fetch your warrant from her hand
That from my mouth assures you not; and then——
Morton. Then shall my hand make answer to her own. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE XII.—CALLANDER.

The QUEEN *and* LADY RERES.

Queen. I do not feel as at past partings; then
My heart was sick and bitter, and mine eye
Saw not beyond the grievous hour at hand;
Now when of all time I should be most sad,
Being parted at love's highest of height from love
And bound to meet love's poison and my plague,
My life's live curse yet married to my life,
Yet am I light and fuller of sweet hope
Than even sweet memory fills me.
Lady Reres. It is well

When dawn discomforts not the whole sweet night.

Queen. There be stars sure that die not of the day,
Or in this hoariest hour of dusk and dew
How should my heart be warm with last night's fire?

Enter BOTHWELL.

What, risen so soon, my lord?

Bothwell. What, not yet forth?
That was the question laughing on your lips,
And this my plea to kill the question with. [*Kissing her.*
I must ride now. There waits a messenger
From our wed lord in Glasgow.

Queen. Ay? would God
He had slipt his saddle and borne his charge to hell!
Must we part here? I ask but what I know,
Only to have a breath more of your mouth,
A smile more of your eye, turn of your head,
Before you kiss and leave me. Why should love,
That can change life, seat and disseat the soul
In heaven or hurl it hellward, break and build,
Root and unroot the very springs o' the heart,
Have not the force to pluck but twelve hours back,
And twice consume and twice consummate life,
Twice crowned and twice confounded? I would give
All but love's self, all hope and heat of life,
But to have over this scant space again,
Since yesterday saw sunset.

Bothwell. You shall win
A better prayer than this; for one poor hour
Caught from the gripe of all good-grudging time,

An hundredfold in long-lived happiness,
Secure and scatheless of all change or fear.
Queen. Yet this joy waited on by fear and doubt,
Plucked casually, a flower of accident,
On the rough lip and edge of danger's breach,
How sweeter is it than the rose to smell
We gather from our garden with gloved hand,
And find nor thorn nor perfume! You must go,
And I part hence; yet all through life and death
I shall have mind of this most gracious place,
Poor palace of all pleasure, where I found
Brief harbourage in long travel of my life.
Now take farewell of me.
Bothwell. Fair lips, farewell,
And love me till we kiss again and sleep. [*Exit.*
Queen. So may my last sleep kiss me at your lips,
And find me full of you as heaven of light
When my time comes of slumber.—Bid this man
Come in that waits: he shall bear word of me
Before I stand in his lord's sight again.

Enter CRAWFORD.

What message from our lord your master, sir?
Crawford. Madam, with all his heart my lord commends
His heart's excuses to your majesty
For the great grief and doubt wherein it stands
Of your unstanched displeasure; of which fear
He lies soul-sick, and sends that heart by me
To crave its pardon of you, and for grace

From your dread lips some comfortable word
That may assure him who now lives in pain
Through the evil news he hears from all winds blown,
In all mouths open; whence as one distraught,
And knowing not how to bear himself secure
Or dare put forth to meet you, for the words
He hears you have said, though fain, I know, to come
And clear himself of aught that you suspect
By present inquisition—this I know,
Though now he laid no charge on me to say—
He hath writ you word already of his grief,
And finds no answer but of bitter sound,
Nor any light of pity from your face,
Nor breath of healing; wherefore on my knees
He kneels before you to require his doom.

Queen. I have no remedy for fear; there grows
No herb of help to heal a coward heart.
Fears were not rank were faults not rank in him.

Crawford. It is no caitiff doubt that pleads with you,
No rootless dread sprung of a craven mood
That bows him down before your highness' foot
To take the sovereign sentence of your eye
And bide and bear its judgment given as God's:
He knows, he says, by proof and speech of men
What cause he has what friends of yours to fear.

Queen. What, must I ride alone to comfort him?
Tell him he may sleep sure then though I come;
Lord Bothwell is bound back to Edinburgh;
There is no man to affright him in my train
But grooms and lacqueys; and for all I hear

He never feared my women.

Crawford. Please it you,
My master doth but wish all hearts of men
Were on their faces written with their faith.

Queen. Hath he no more than this, our lord, to say?
Then let him hold his peace; and bear him word
That of our grace we come to cherish him
With not a man's face to procure his dread.
Tell him so much and bid him keep good heart,
If heart he have, even for my sake who swear
He shall not long live in this fear of me.

SCENE XIII.—DARNLEY'S LODGING IN GLASGOW.

DARNLEY *on a couch, as sick;* CRAWFORD *in attendance.*

Darnley. She is come in then?

Crawford. Presently she comes.

Darnley. You found her yet more sharp of eye than tongue?

Crawford. Ay.

Darnley. Would I had but strength to bring myself
Forth of this land where none will pity me,
No, not the least of all you, though I die.
Who comes with her? what household? I would speak
With Joachim her French fellow there, to know
Why she should come—you cannot show me—ay,
And if for good—and if they come with her,

Her outland folk and Bothwell's—or at least
If she have mind yet to send off or no
Joseph, her dead knave's brother? Are you sure
Himself shall come not? wherefore being come in
Should she not lodge beside me? Nay, I hear
More than she wots of, and have spies that see
What counsels breed among the crew of them.
What talk was that of marriage that should be
Between her fiddler and no maid of hers,
To what fair end? Would God I might take ship,
I would make speed for England; there at least
They durst not lay their nets about my life:
Here every wind that blows hath smells of blood.
I am lost and doomed; lost, lost.

Crawford. Have better thoughts.
Take hope to you, and cheer.

Darnley. Ay, ay, much cheer!
Ye are all in one to abuse me, snare and slay—
Ye are all one heart to hate, one hand to smite;
I have none to love nor do me good, not one,
One in the world's width, of all souls alive.
I am dead and slain already in your hearts:
By God, if ever I stand up strong again,
I will be even with all you. Doth she think
I fear her? there is none that lives I fear.
What said she to you?

Crawford. With her last breath she said
You should no longer live in fear of her.

Darnley. Why, so I do not: nay, nor ever did.
Let her come now and find I fear her not,

What shall she say?

(*Without*) Make way there for the queen.

Enter the QUEEN, *attended.*

Queen. How is it with our lord?

Darnley. Ill is it, ill,
Madam, and no lord but your servant here.
Will you not kiss me?

Queen. Nay, you are sick indeed.
Let me sit here, and give me but your hand.
I have a word with you to speak for love,
And not for chiding.

Darnley. I beseech you, no:
I have no force to bear man's chiding now,
Being sick, and all my sickness is of you,
That look so strange and heavily on me;
Howbeit I could now die, I am made so glad,
For very joy to see you; if I die,
Look, I leave all things to your only will,
And of my pure love make no testament,
Nor lay no charge on any else for love.

Queen. I will rebuke you not but tenderly,
As a right wife and faithful woman; sir,
What word was that you wrote me, and wherein
And wherefore taxing some for cruelty,
Of what suspicion misconceived and born,
That came forth of your hand to strike my heart?
You that have found no cause, and will not say
You have found or shall find ever cause of fear,
So to misdoubt me—what could sting you so,

What adder headed thought or venomous dream,
To make you shoot at this bared breast to you
Suspicion winged and whetted with ill thoughts?
What words were these to write, what doubts to breed,
Of mere mistrust and stark unfriendliness?
Nay, and I know not, God can witness me,
So much as what you doubt or what misdeem
Or wherein hold me dangerous or my friends,
More than I know what source your sickness hath,
Whereof I would fain think all this is bred
And all ill fears grown but of feverish nights.
What cause most ails you? or what think you on?

Darnley. I think how I am punished—ay, God knows
I am punished that I made my God of you.
What should I mean of cruelty but yours
That will not look on my sore penitence
For my least sin, as God would look on all?
Though I confess wherein I have failed indeed,
Yet never in worse kind than was avowed,
And many a man for such revolt as mine
Hath had your pardon; in this kind I have sinned,
Not in such wise as ever I denied,
And am yet young; and though you should cast up
How often being forgiven I have gone back
And fallen in fresh offence of you that late
Forgave me, may not any twice or thrice
So slip that is none older than I am,
Or slack his promise plighted, yet in the end,
Repenting, by experience be chastised?

If my weak years and grief may get but grace,
I swear I never shall make fault again ;
And this is all, and honest, that I crave,
To have again my wife to bed and board,
Which if I may not by consent of you
Out of this bed I never will rise more.
I pray you tell me whereof you resolve,
That I may die or live, who have no thought
But only of you ; and at such luckless time
As ever I offend you, even the offence
Grows of yourself ; for when I am wronged or wroth
If I for refuge might complain to you
Of any that offends me, I would speak
Into no ear but yours ; but being estranged,
What now soe'er I hear, necessity
Binds me to keep it in my breast, and hence
I am moved to try my wit on mine own part
For very anger. Now, being at your foot,
Will you forgive me ? that for love indeed
And fear of you have trespassed, being so young,
And had no good man's counsel, and no guard,
No light, no help, no stay,—was yet scarce man,
And have so loved you whom I sinned against.

Queen. Why would you pass in the English ship away ?

Darnley. I swear by God I never thought thereon ;
I spake but with the men ; but though I had,
I might have well ta'en hold on such a thought,
To hear much less things than the least I heard.

Queen. What inquisition was it that you made

To hear such things as fright you?

Darnley. Nay, by heaven,
I have made none; I never sought man out
To speak with any; I swear I see no spies.

Queen. Must I return to your own ear again
The very words were spoken?

Darnley. I did hear
There was a letter brought you to subscribe
By certain of the council, to the intent
I should be cast in prison, and with power
To slay me by your warrant, should I make
Resistance; Highgate said so; I confess
I spake with him; my father that first heard
Brought him to speech of me.

Queen. Spake he so much?
But Walcar, that at Stirling brought me word
Of this man's speeches here, had heard of him
That you with certain of our lords had laid
A plot to take our son, and having crowned
Reign for him king of Scots; whereon the man
Being had before our council with good speed
Swore he knew no such tale, and had but heard
Some rumour blown of your imprisonment,
But nothing of your slaying; to which again
His witness summoned gave him straight the lie.
Yet would I not conceive the tale for true
That being incensed with some our loyal lords
Who were not of the faction that should lay
Such regency upon you for your son,
You had threatened them aloud with wrath to come.

What say you to it?

Darnley. I say you do me wrong
To speak to me of him that as you say
Belied me to you; who saith so of me lies,
And I will pluck his ears from off his head,
The knave whose tongue so misdelivers me.
And I beseech you think he lies that saith
I would be wroth with any man your friend,
Or would not rather give away my life
Than by despite toward such displease you; yet
I have heard strange things here of a trustier tongue;
The Laird—you know him—of Minto, my fast friend,
If any friend be fast on earth to me,
He told me to what bond what hands were set;
Yea, and more hands than those that signed me dead,
He swore, were set to slay me; but God knows
I gave no faith to it—would not dream or doubt
You could devise, that were my proper flesh,
To do me any evil; nay, I said
It was well seen you would not, by their writ
Against my life that you subscribed not; else,
Could I think once you hungered for my death,
God knows I would not hold you hungering long,
But make mine own throat naked for your knife
As readily as your hand could pluck it forth:
Howbeit the best man of mine enemies else
Should buy me dear—ay, any of all but you,
Except he took me sleeping; as indeed
Were now not hard to take me: had I but
A hand to help my heart, and health to go,

A foot to stand against them, God and you,
Madam, should oversee us and judge ; but now
You see what power I have, what hope of help,
What strength to serve my will and my best heart
Lies in my broken body ; ay, these know that,
What force is left to second my goodwill
They know who durst not else devise or do,
Had I the natural might yet of my limbs,
What now—but you, if you have pity of me,
Seeing me how faint I am and how sore sick,
And cannot eat for weakness, though I faint,
That makes me loathe my meat—but will you not
Feed me, and kiss me? surely I could live,
Being quickened of your hands and piteous lips,
So sweet you are and strong and large of life.
Nay, do but kiss me once though I must die,
Be it but lest all men say you loved me not.

Queen. I have a pain here takes me in my side—
I pray you—where my sickness left it sore
And liable to swift pains yet—pardon me.

Darnley. 'Tis I you cannot pardon, I, woe's me,
You cannot love or pardon ; but I swear,
So be it you will not leave me, I will go,
So but I may not lose you out of sight,
Borne in a litter, such as here I lie,
So weak, so full of sickness, where you will,
Be it to Craigmillar, though death went with me,
Or to the world's end, going in sight of you.

Queen. Have here my hand then and my faith to it, sir,
When there the healing springs have washed you whole

As they shall surely, with cold cleansing streams
Whose medicinal might shall bathe your veins
And kill the fire that feeds upon their blood,
I will once more dwell with you as your wife,
In all the lovely works and ways of love
And dues of duteous life and unity
That man may claim of woman. Tell me now,
Ere we go thither, where the leech and I
May help you, nor be far off from my son,
What are those lords you are wroth at? since I hear
Some are there that you threaten, as in doubt
Their minds are bitter toward you; shall I say
You stand in fear of Maitland?

Darnley. Him? not I—
I pray you speak not of him for my sake—
I stand in fear of no man; I beseech you,
Speak me not of him; I will see no man,
To be our makebate and your talebearer;
I have heard too of your brother, how he says
I spake with him at Stirling, where I swear
I came not in his chamber, spake not half
Of all whereof he has rounded in your ear
That I made plaint to him concerning you;
For all my faults are published in your eye,
And I deny not one, and nought put off;
What should it boot me to deny my speech?
But there are they that think the faults they make
Shall to all time lie still unspoken of,
Yet will they speak aloud of small and great
And tax alike all faults of other folk,

The least fault as the worst, in men like me
That have not craft to hide or most or least;
God save you from such friendship: it is thought,
Through power upon you of such evil tongues,
Yourself have not your power upon yourself,
As by your slight still of my proffered love
I would believe you have not; such a friend
Rode with you hither—or unfriend as I doubt—
I like her not—the Lady Reres, your friend;
I pray God she may serve you, if she be,
To your own honour; it runs through all men's mouths
She was Lord Bothwell's harlot, who stands marked
For a lewd liver above all men alive;
She and her sister both lie side by side
Under the like report of his rank love—
Foul concord and consent unsisterlike
In such communion as beasts shun for shame.
Nay, for you know it, it lives on common lips,
Cries from all tongues, you know it; but for my part
I will love all that love you, though they were
But for that love's sake shameful in men's eyes.
Why will you wake not with me this one night,
But so soon leave me, and I sleep so ill?

Queen. Nay, though this night I may not watch with you,
I leave you not till you turn back with me;
But for the lords' sake must it not be known
That if you change not purpose ere that time
When you are whole we shall be one again;

Lest when they know it, remembering your loud threat
To make them find, if ever we agreed,
What small account they had made of you, and how
You had counselled me to take not some of them
To grace again without assent of yours,
They fall in fear and jealousy, to see
The scene so broken and the play so changed
Without their knowledge, that contrariwise
Was first set up before them.

Darnley. Think you then
They will for that the more esteem of you?
But I am glad at heart you speak of them,
And do believe now you desire indeed
That we should live together in quietness;
For were it otherwise, to both of us
Might worse fall than we wot of; but I now
Will do whatever you will do, and love
All that you love; and I have trust in you
To draw them in like manner to my love;
Whom since I know they aim not at my life
I will love all alike, and there shall be
No more dissension of your friends and mine.

Queen. It was by fault of you all this fell out
That I must heal. For this time fare you well;
When I get rest I will return again.

[*Exit with attendants.*

Darnley. What say you now? she is gentler in mine eyes
Than was your word of her.

Crawford. Ay, sweet to sight,

Exceeding gentle. Wherefore, could one tell,
Should she desire to lead you so in hand
Just to Craigmillar? whence report came late
Of no good counsel toward you or good hope,
Except the hope be good, there to be healed
Of all life's ill for ever, once being bathed
In the cold springs of death: and hence meseems
More like a prisoner than her wedded lord
Are you borne off as in her bonds.

Darnley. By heaven,
I think but little less, and fear myself,
Save for the trust indeed I have in her
And in her promise only; howsoe'er,
I will go with her and put me in her hands,
Though she should cut my throat; and so may God
Between us both be judge. I have been men's fool
That were but tongues and faces of my friends;
I see by mine own sight now, and will stand
On no man's feet but mine. Give me to drink;
I will sleep now; my heart is healed of fear.

SCENE XIV.—THE QUEEN'S APARTMENT IN THE SAME.

The QUEEN *and* PARIS.

Queen. Here is the letter for your lord to know
I bring the man on Monday, as is writ,
Hence to Craigmillar. Say too this by mouth,
The Lady Reres can witness, with mine oath,

I would not let him kiss me. Bid our lord,
Mine and your lord, enquire of Maitland first
If our past purpose for Craigmillar hold
Or if the place be shifted, and send word
To me that here await his will by you.
Be of good speed ; I say not of good trust,
Who know you perfect in his trust and mine.
Farewell.

Paris. I am gone with all good haste I may,
And here come back to serve your majesty.
Hath it no further counsel or command
To be my message?

Queen. Tell him, night and day
And fear and hope are grown one thing to me
Save for his sake : and say mine hours and thoughts
Are as one fire devouring grain by grain
This pile of tares and drift of crumbling brands
That shrivels up in the slow breath of time,
The part of life that keeps me far from him,
The heap of dusty days that sunder us.
I would I could burn all at once away
And our lips meet across the mid red flame
Thence unconsumed, being made of keener fire
Than any burns on earth. Say that mine eyes
Ache with mine heart and thirst with all my veins,
Requiring him they have not. Say my life
Is but as sleep, and my sleep very life,
That dreams upon him. Say I am passing now
To do that office he would have me do,
Which almost is a traitor's; say, his love

Makes me so far dissemble, that myself
Have horror at it; bid him keep in mind
How were it not to obey him I had rather
Be dead before I did it; let him not
Have ill opinion of me for this cause,
Seeing he is alone the occasion of it himself,
Since for mine own particular revenge
I would not do it to him that I most hate;
My heart bleeds at it. Say, he will not come
But on condition I shall cleave to him
Hereafter, and on that word given of mine
Will go where I would have him go: alas,
I never have deceived yet any man,
But I remit me to my master's will
In all things wholly; bid him send me word
What I shall do, and come what may thereof
I shall obey him; if some new subtler way
By medicine may be thought on when I bring
The man here to Craigmillar, that as yet
May not this long time of himself go forth
Out of the house, let him advise himself
How to put this in hand: for all I find,
This man I here endure to play upon
Lives now in great suspicion; yet my word
Hath credit with him, but not far enough
For him to show me anything; but yet
I shall draw forth of him what thing I will
If my lord bid me be more plain with him;
But I will never take delight to wrong
The trust of any that puts trust in me;

Yet may my lord command me in all things.
And though by checks and hints of that I feared
This man sometimes even touch me to the quick
With words dropt of mine honour and my power
On mine own self, whereby I surely know
That he suspects him of the thing we wot
And of his life, yet as to that last fear
I need but say some three good words to him
And he rejoices, and is out of doubt.
He was seen never as gay of mood as now
When I make show of grace and gentle heart,
And puts me in remembrance of all things
That may assure my faith he loves me well.
Let not my love suspect me for his sake,
Who take such great joy of his love-making
That I come never where he is but straight
I take the sickness of my sore side here,
I am vexed so with it ; wearied might he be,
This poisonous man that gives me all this pain
When I would speak of things far sweeter ; yet
He is marred not overmuch of form or face
Though he have borne much, and his venomed breath
Hath almost slain me though I sit far off.
He would have had me watch with him, but I
Put off the night ; he says he sleeps not sound ;
He never spake more humbly nor more well ;
And if I had not proven his heart of wax
And were not mine cut of a diamond
Whereinto no shot ever can make breach
But that which flies forth of mine own love's hand,

I had almost had pity of him ; but say
I bid the captain of my fortressed heart
Fear not ; the place shall hold unto the death.
And bid my love in recompense thereof
Let not his own be won by that false kind
That will no less strive with him for the same.
I think the twain were trained up in one school,
For he hath ever tear in eye, and makes
Most piteous moan to arouse men's pity, yea,
Humbly salutes them all, even to the least,
To make their hearts soft toward him ; and desires
That with mine own hands I would give him meat ;
But let my lord, where he is, give no more trust
Than I shall here. Tell him all this ; and say
I am in the doing here of a work I hate
Past measure ; and should make him fain to laugh
To see me lie so well, or at the least
So well dissemble, and tell him truth 'twixt hands.
Say, by the flatteries I perforce must make
And prayers to him to assure himself of me,
And by complaint made of the men designed,
I have drawn out of him all we list to know,
Yet never touched one word of that your lord
Showed me, but only wrought by wiles ; and say
With two false kinds we are coupled, I and he,
My love ; the devil dissever us, and God
Knit us together for the faithfullest pair
That ever he made one ; this is my faith,
I will die in it. Excuse me to my lord
That I writ ill last night, being ill at ease,

And when the rest were sleeping was most glad
To write unto him, who might no more, nor could
Sleep as they did and as I would desire,
Even in my dear love's arms ; whom I pray God
Keep from all evil and send him all repose.
And being so long my letter hindered me
To write what tidings of myself I would,
Who had wrought before for two hours of the day
Upon this bracelet I would send to him
Though it be evil made for fault of time,
I have had so little, and I can get no lock,
Though that mine hands might end it yestereve
I would not see the man ; but this mean time
I think to make one fairer ; let him not
Bring it in sight of any that was here,
For all would know it, seeing it was wrought for haste
In sight of them ; yet might it bring some harm
And may be seen if he should chance be hurt ;
Let him send word if he will have it, and say
If he will have more gold by you, and when
I shall return, and how far I may speak ;
For this man waxes mad to hear of him
Or of my brother ; and when I visit him
His friends come all to be my convoy, say,
And he desires me come the morn betimes
And see him rise. This letter that I send,
Bid my lord burn it, being so dangerous,
With nought in it well said,—for all my mind
Was on this craft I loath to think upon—
And if it find his hand in Edinburgh,

Let him soon send me word, and that I doubt
Be not offended, since to doubts of him
I give not o'er-great credit; but say this,
That seeing to obey him, who is my dear heart's love,
I spare nor honour, conscience, hazard, state,
Nor greatness whatsoever, I beseech him
But that he take it in good part, and not
As his false brother-in-law interprets, whom
I pray him give not ear to nor believe
Against the faithfullest lover he ever had
Or ever shall have; nor cast eye on her
Whose feigned tears should not be esteemed so much
Nor prized so as the true and faithful toils
Which I sustain but to deserve her place:
Whereto that I despite all bonds may climb,
Against my nature I betray them here
That may prevent me from it; God forgive me,
And God give him, my only love, the hap
And welfare which his humble and faithful love
Desires of him; who hopes to be to him
Ere long a thing new-named for recompense
Of all her irksome travails. Tell him this;
Say I could never stint of hand or tongue
To send love to him, and that I kiss his hands,
Ending; and let him think upon his love
And write to her, and that oft; and read twice through
Mine evil-written letter, and keep in mind
All several sayings writ of the man therein.
Say for delight I have to send to him

I run twice over all the words I send,
And that each word may fasten in his ear
As in his eye, and you may witness me
That hand and tongue and heart were one to send,
Put all my message in your lips again
That here was written. Say—I know not what ;
I can say nought but with my silent hands,
Speak with the lips of deeds I do for him.

Paris. Shall I say nothing of Lord Darnley more?

Queen. Say, when I did but speak of Maitland once,
His caitiff flesh quaked in each joint of him,
Each limb and bone shivered ; even to the feet
He shook, and his shrunk eyes were stark with fright,
That like a live thing shuddered in his hair
And raised it ruffling from the roots for dread.
Let him mark that: though coward the man be, and fool,
He has wit and heart enough to know the worst
Of his wrong-doing, and to what manner of man,
Being fool, he did it, and discerning him
Think whether his cause of dread be small or no
For less or more of peril. So to horse,
And lose no word sent of my heart to him.

SCENE XV.—KIRK OF FIELD.

Enter BOTHWELL.

Bothwell. This is the time and here the point of earth
That is to try what fate will make of me.

I hold here in my hand my hand's desire,
The fruit my life has climbed for; day on day
Have I strid over, stretching toward this prize
With all my thews and spirits. I must be glad,
If I could think; yet even my cause of joy
Doth somewhat shake me, that my sense and soul
Seem in their springs confused, even as two streams
Violently mingling: what is here to do
Is less now than the least I yet have done,
Being but the putting once of the mere hand
To the thing done already in device,
Wrought many times out in the working soul.
Yet my heart revels not, nor feel I now
The blood again leap in me for delight
That in the thought grew riotous and beat high
With foretaste of possession unpossessed.
Is it that in all alike fruition slacks
The shrunk imagination? in all deeds
The doing undoes the spirit to do, the joy
Sickens, the lust is swallowed as of sand?
Why, yet the stream should run of my desire
Unshrunken, and no deserts drink it up,
Being unfulfilled; no satiate sluggishness
Gape with dry lips at the edge of the dry cup
For the poor lees of longing. I am here
Not royal yet, nor redder in the hand
Than war has dyed me fighting; the thing done
Is but for me done, since I hold it so,
Not yet for him that in the doing must bleed;
I that stand up to do it, and in my mind
Behold across it mightier days for deeds,

Should not be way-sick yet nor travel-tired
Before I drink fulfilment as a wine ;
And here must it restore me.

Enter PARIS.

Ha ! so soon ?
What news of her ?

Paris. The queen commends to you
Her best heart in this letter, and would know
How yet your purpose toward Craigmillar bears,
Whether to train him thither by her hand
Or what choice else.

Bothwell. Say, the device is changed
By counsel and consent of whom she wots ;
Here must they come ; James Balfour and myself
Have waked all night to see things well begun,
For that bond's sake whereto his hand was set
With mine here at Craigmillar ; all things now
Stand apt and fit in this his brother's house
To entertain the kingship of its guest ;
We have seen to it, Maitland with us.

Paris. I was sent
From the town hither, finding you set forth,
But why folk wist not.

Bothwell. Carry to my queen
This diamond ; say too I would send my heart,
But that she hath already, and no need
To pluck it forth and feel it in her hand.
Bid her be swift as we have been for love,
And the more surety quickens our design :
The rest unsaid shall tarry till she come.

SCENE XVI.—THE QUEEN'S LODGING IN GLASGOW.

The QUEEN *in bed;* LADY RERES *and* PARIS *attending.*

Queen. What was his word at parting? let it kiss
Mine ear again.

Paris. Being horsed, he bade me say,
Madam, he would be fain for love of you
To train a pike all his life-days.

Queen. Please God,
It shall not come to that. Ere this month die
That has not half a week to live, we stand
In Edinburgh together. He will go
Without more word or fear; and being well hence—
How looked my love?

Paris. Madam, as one uplift
To the height of heart and hope, though full of cares,
And keen in resolution.

Queen. I grow strong
To hear of him. Hath he not heart enough
To fill with blood a hundred of our hearts,
Put force and daring, for the fear cast out,
In all our veins made manlike? Prithee, Reres,
Was he thus ever? had he so great heart
In those dead days, such lordliness of eye
To see and smite and burn in masterdom,
Such fire and iron of design and deed
To serve his purpose and sustain his will?
Hath he not grown since years that knew me not

In light and might and speed of spirit and stroke
To lay swift hand upon his thought, and turn
Its cloud to flame, its shadow to true shape,
Its emptiness to fulness? If in sooth
He was thus always, he should be by now
Hailed the first head of the earth.

Lady Reres. It cannot be
But in your light he hath waxed, and from your love,
Madam, drawn life and increase; but indeed
His heart seemed ever high and masterful
As of a king unkingdomed, and his eye
As set against the sunrise; such a brow
As craves a crown to do it right, and hand
Made to hold empire swordlike, and a foot
To tread the topless and unfooted hill
Whose light is from the morn of majesty.

Queen. When mine eye first took judgment of his face
It read him for a king born: and his lips
Touching my hand for homage had as 'twere
Speech without sound in them that bowed my heart
In much more homage to his own. Would God
I could so read now in that heart I serve
What thought of me moves in it, hear what word
Now hangs upon those lips; if now his eye
Darken or lighten toward mine unseen face,
Or his ear hearken for my speech unheard.
Why art thou now not with him, and again
Here the same hour to tell me? I would have
More messengers than minutes that divide
Mine eyes from their desire, to bring me word

With every breath of every change in him,
If he but rest or rise ; nay, might it be,
Of every thought or heart-beat that makes up
His inner hours of life : yet by mine own,
If he so loved me, should I know them not
I will rise now and pass to see how soon
We may set forth to-morrow.

Lady Reres. Can it be
He shall have strength ? but let your highness heed
That pretext be not given for knaves to say
You had no care to wait on his good time,
But vexed and harried him, being sick, with haste
And timeless heat of travel.

Queen. Fear not you :
I will make means to bring him in my hand
As a tame hound, and have his thanks and love
For bringing him so wifelike on his way.
It is the last pain I shall take for him,
The last work I shall do for marriage-sake
And wifehood wellnigh done with duty now.
I have not much more time to serve my lord,
And strife shall fall between us twain no more.

Scene XVII.—Darnley's Chamber in Kirk of Field.

Darnley *and* Nelson.

Darnley. Thou hast the keys ? This house is strange and chill,
As chill as earth : I have slept no better here.

Those two days that we halted on the way
There at Linlithgow, I could see the haste
That burnt in her to be in Edinburgh,
And here being come she sets me in this grange,
And till her chamber be made ready sleeps
In Holyrood apart, and here by day
Hath still by her that face I warned her from,
That woman's that I spake of, plays and sings
There in the garden with none else—by God,
I like not aught of it. I am sick again,
Sick-hearted, or my will should be a sword
To sunder them. I would I were away.
I have ill dreams, man.

Nelson. Please your highness——

Darnley. Ay!

Is majesty gone out of all men's mouths?
Is my state dead before me, even the name
Dead of my place, then?

Nelson. There is come from court
Lord Robert Stuart to see your majesty.

Darnley. Let him come in. Robert? he was my friend;
I think he held me dear till David died:
He supped with them that night. I found him once
A quick-souled fellow that would quaff and kiss
The glow of woman's or of wine-cup's mouth,
And laugh as mine own lips that loved the like
Can now no more this long time. Let him come.

Enter ROBERT STUART.

My holy lord of Holyrood-house, good day;
You find a fit man for a ghostly rede.

Robert Stuart. I am glad you have a jest yet; but I come
On graver foot than jesters run, my lord.

Darnley. How, graver than your ghostly name? nay, then
'Tis matter for a grave-side.

Robert Stuart. Sir, it may:
I would be secret with you.

Darnley. What, alone?
Why should we talk alone? what secret? why?

Robert Stuart. I will put off my sword and give it your man,
If that will ease you.

Darnley. Ease me? what, by God,
You think I fear you come to kill me? tush,
I am not the fool—and were that all, being thus,
'Faith, you might end me with your naked hands.
Leave us. [*Exit* NELSON.
What is it? you make me not afraid—
Sir, I fear no man—what, for God's sake speak,
I am not moved—in God's name let me have it.

Robert Stuart. I came to do you such good service, sir,
As none has done you better nor can do.
There is an old phrase in men's mouths of one
That stands between the devil and the deep sea;

So now stand you; the man that toward a reef
Drives naked on a thunderstricken wreck
And helmless, hath not half your cause of fear;
The wretch that drops plague-eaten limb from limb
Crumbles to death not half so fast as you:
The grave expects not the new-shrouded man
More surely than your corpse now coffinless.

Darnley. Who put this in your mouth? what enemy?
How have you heart, or whosoe'er he be,
Albeit ye hate me as the worm of hell
Who never harmed you in my hapless days,
To use me so? I am sick——

Robert Stuart. Ay, sick to death,
If you give ear not to me that am come
In very mercy, seeing I called you friend,
For pity's sake to save you, or at least
To stretch your days out for some brief span more
Of life now death-devoted.

Darnley. What, so soon?
God would not have it done, so young I am,—
What have I done that he should give me up?
So comfortless,—who hath no help of man,
They say, hath God's; God help me! for God knows
There is none living hath less help of man.
Nay, and he must, as I have faith in God,
Hang all my hope upon him,—For God's sake,
Whence got you this?

Robert Stuart. No matter.

Darnley, At whose hand—

O me, what hand! who is it shall touch me
Robert Stuart. Hark.

From beneath is heard the QUEEN'S *voice, singing.*

Qui se fie
À la vie
A vau-l'eau va vers la mort;
Et que l'onde
Rie ou gronde,
Elle entraîne loin du port.

Darnley. She sings I know not what—a jesting song,
A French court rhyme no graver than a flower,
Fruitless of sense—this is no threat—a toy——

QUEEN (*from beneath, sings*).

Sur l'opale
Du flot pâle
Tremble un peu de jour encor;
Sur la plage
Au naufrage
Le haut vent sonne du cor.

Darnley. What is it she sings now? nay, what boots to hear?
I will not hear; speak to me—pray you, speak.

QUEEN (*from beneath*).

La mort passe
Comme en chasse,
Et la foudre aboie aux cieux;
L'air frissonne,
La mer tonne,
Le port se dérobe aux yeux.

Plus d'étoile
Que ne voile
L'orage âpre au souffle noir ;
Pas de brise
Qui ne brise
Quelque vaisseau sans espoir.

Noire et nue
Sous la nue,
La nef brisée à moitié
Tourne et vire
Où l'attire
La sombre mer sans pitié.

La nuit passe,
Et la chasse
S'est éteinte au fond des cieux ;
Mais l'aurore
Pleure encore
Sur les morts qu'ont vus ses yeux.

Ce qui tombe
Dans la tombe
Coule et s'en va sans retour ;
Quand sous l'ombre
Plonge et sombre
Ou la vie ou bien l'amour.

Robert Stuart. Why do you shake and hide your eyes? take heart;
Let fear not be more swift to slay than hate.

Darnley. I said, what hand—you bade me hearken—well,
What say you now she sings not?

Robert Stuart. I have said.

Darnley. I will not be your baiting-stock; speak plain;
Whence had you word of any plot on me?

Robert Stuart. If you will heed me, well; if not, for me
I will take heed yet that it be not ill.
Weigh how you will my counsel, I am sure
If my word now lie lightly in your ear
It would not lie the heavier for my oath
Or any proof's assurance. Whence I had
This word you have of me, I am not bound
To put the knowledge into trust of you
Who trust not me in asking.

Darnley. What, I knew
There was no plot but yours to scare me, none—
Your plot to get my favour, stay yourself
On me as on a staff—affright me sick
With bloodred masks of words and painted plots,
And so take hold upon me afterward
Having my strength again and state and power—
A worthy friend and timely,—Nay, but, nay,
I meant not so—I am half distraught—I meant
I know you for my friend indeed and true;
For one thwart word in sickness cast not off
Your friend that puts his trust in you, your friend
That was nigh mad a minute, being sore sick
And weak and full of pain and fear, and hath
No friend to help and bear with him if you
Will help nor bear not—by my faith and life
I do believe you love me, and in love
Came, and in faith to me—if I believe not
God give me death at once and hell to boot.
I pray you pardon.

Robert Stuart. Sir, your faith and life
Have neither weight enough to poise an oath
As now they hang in balance. If you will,
Take to your heart my words ; if not, be sure
It shall not grieve me though you trust me not,
Who never think to give you counsel more. [*Exit.*

Darnley. Nay, but one word—how would you have me fly ?
He goes and mocks me—would my hands had strength
To dig his heart out for my dogs to feed !
He flies and leaves me weaponless alone
In the eye of peril, coward and false heart—
Should not the tongue be false too ? If he came
To affright me only with a fearful face,
Blow but a blast of danger in mine ear,
And make my faith as wax that in his breath
Might melt and be reshapen of his hands—
Nay, I will see the queen, and in her eye
Read if his tongue spake truth, and from her lips
Draw forth his witness ; if she mean me ill
I cannot now but see it. Nelson !—She hath
No trick to keep her from mine instant sight,
Knows not his errand to me ; and at once
I take her unawares and catch her soul
Naked, her mind plain to me, good or ill.

QUEEN (*sings from below*).

Lord Love went Maying
Where Time was playing,
In light hands weighing
Light hearts with sad ;

Crowned king with peasant,
Pale past with present,
Harsh hours with pleasant,
Good hopes with bad;
Nor dreamed how fleeter
Than Time's swift metre,
O'er all things sweeter
How clothed with power,
The murderess maiden
Mistrust walks laden
With red fruit ruined and dead white flower.

Darnley. What sting is in that song to smite my heart
And make the blood and breath come short in me?
O God, I know it—his last year's song of death—
They struck it on his lips who struck him through.
Nelson! I will not see her—I will not die——

Enter the QUEEN.

Queen. I heard your call from under and came in—
What ails you, sir? why stare you thus askance?

Darnley. I had a pang of sickness that passed by
While you were singing.

Queen. Is my brother gone?

Darnley. There was none here—your brother? what, the earl?
Doth not his wife lie at St. Andrew's sick,
Where he is gone to visit her?

Queen. For love,
Why will you lie to me in jest? you know
Here was my brother Robert.

Darnley. Ay, but now—
I did not say he was not here but now.

Queen. Has he not moved you?
Darnley. Why should I be moved?
I am not lightly shaken of men's breath;
What think you that he came to move me for?
Queen. In faith, I guess not.
Darnley. Nay, though I be weak,
I am no reed yet for him to blow and make
What music of me shall best please his mouth.
Queen. I think you are not, but for all winds blown
Of fears and threats fixed and unshakeable.
What said he to you that has moved you not?
Darnley. Nothing.
Queen. What, you were moved then
of his words?
Darnley. I say I was not.
Queen. He said nothing then?
You held discourse but of days foul or fair,
Skies wet or dry, seasons and accidents,
All things and nothing?
Darnley. Would you not know that?
Queen. Even as you list or list not, so would I.
Darnley. What if it please me you should know
this not?
Queen. Why, you do wisely, seeing I love you not.
Darnley. I did not say so; I may hold my peace,
Yet not for doubt that irks me of your love.
Queen. Surely you may; good reasons may stand
thick
As buds in April in your judgment's sight
To cover both your counsels from mine eye

That has no lust to invade your secrecies.

Darnley. And if it please me show it, as now it shall,
You will not dread I doubt your love of me.

Queen. I have not heart to dread the doubt I know
You have not heart to harbour of my love.

Darnley. Why, he came here to warn me of my life.

Queen. Your life?

Darnley. Ay, mine; and what now say you to him?

Queen. I say he spake as your good friend and mine.

Darnley. Ay?

Queen. What more kindness could be shown of man
Than in your ear to warn me of your life
If it so stand in peril?

Darnley. What, you think
He told it me to have me tell it you?

Queen. It was done gently, brother-like, for fear
The word of danger being first heard by me
Should strike too sharp upon my slighter soul
And pierce my woman's sense with such quick pangs
As might dethrone my judgment, shake my wits
To feminine confusion, and by force
Disable my swift thoughts, now maimed with dread,
From their defence and office; he did well
And my heart thanks him, showing you first his fear,
Who are manlike of your mood and mould of mind
And have but for your own life to take thought,
Not for one dearer; as, I know you well,
By mine own heart I know, to have heard of me
Endangered would have killed your heart with fear,

That in your personal peril beats at ease
With blood as perfect as I see you now,
With pulse thus changeless and with cheek thus calm.
Indeed I thank him for it, and twice I thank,
That he would serve you and would scare not me.
Where said he was this danger?

Darnley. Nay, by God,
That would he not say; that I nothing know;
Save by some hint of shoulder or writhed lip
That seemed to shoot at you; and when you sang
He bade me hearken, and would speak no more.

Queen. At me! but if such fire be on his tongue,
It should be forked and set on fire of hell.
At me! but if he be not mad, to you
He shall approve it, instant face to face,
Eye to confronted eye, word against word,
He shall maintain or mark himself for liar,
With his own fire and iron brand the brow
That burned not to belie me.

Darnley. Sweet, not here—
Would I could fight with him! but being o'erthrown
Of my disease already, to what end
Should he come back now save to insult on me
Who have no hand to strike at him again
In championship of you?

Queen. He shall come back,
And twice shall oversay the word he said
In your own ear, or else unswear it. What,
Shall I be put to shame of mine own blood,
To mine own lord in mine own love maligned,
Stricken with slanderous fangs of speech, and stabbed

In my heart's core of honour, yet lie still
And bleed to death dumb and dishonourable?
Rather let come the deadliest of my kin,
Mine enemies born, and bind and burn me quick,
Or ever I die thus; rather let all
The false blood of my father in strange veins
Be set on fire against me, and its heat
Consume my fame with my frail flesh, and make
My scaffold of my kingdom; rather fall
My naked head beneath the mortal axe,
And with my blood my name be spilt and shed,
Than this charge come upon me.

Darnley. You are stirred
Beyond all right of reason; be not moved:
You see how I believed him.

Queen. And to see
Is my soul's comfort; but this wound that bleeds
Here in my heart's heart cannot well be stanched
Till by the tongue that smote me, as men say
That by the anointing of the sword that hurt
The wound it made finds comfort, I be healed.

Darnley. Nay, let him come; I will maintain it to him,
Here, to his face, he warned me of my death
Or present danger in you.

Queen. He shall come.
But lie now down and sleep; I have wearied you.

Darnley. I pray you sing me something then; indeed
I am weary and would forget; but now you sang—
Doth that French song break where you broke it off?

Queen. No, there is more. Sleep, I will sing it you.

[*Sings.*

Sur la grève
Rien ne rêve
Aux naufragés de la nuit ;
À la trombe,
Gouffre et tombe,
Au flot qui frappe et qui fuit.

Apaisée
Et baisée
Par les brises sans souci,
Brille et vibre
Au jour libre
La belle mer sans merci.

Tant que dure
La nuit dure
Sur la grève où rit la mort,
Sous l'orage
Flotte et nage
Le jour qui lutte et qui sort.

Pas de brume
Que n'allume
L'astre ou l'éclair des amours ;
Pas de flamme
Qui dans l'âme
Brûle ou luise tous les jours.

À l'aurore
Tout se dore,
Tout se fane avant la nuit ;
Et que l'heure
Chante ou pleure,
Dans une heure tout s'enfuit.

Cœur sans crainte,
Œil sans feinte,
Quand l'amour met voile au vent,
Sur la plage
Sans naufrage
Est-il revenu souvent ?

L'ombre emporte
La nef morte,
Et la joie, et le beau jour
Trop profonde
Était l'onde,
Et trop faible était l'amour.

[*The scene closes.*

SCENE XVIII.—BEHIND KIRK OF FIELD.

BOTHWELL, ORMISTON, HEPBURN *of* BOLTON, *and* HAY *of* TALLA.

Bothwell. If it be done to-morrow, we shall stand
The surer that the queen slept here to-night.
Cousin, bring you my knaves from Holyrood
At nightfall to that hinder gate wherethrough
We three shall give you passage with your charge
To the strait garden-plot beyond the walls
Whereto the door that opens from beneath
Shall stand unbolted, and you entering spread
Along the blind floor of the nether vault
The train that shall set all these walls on wing.

Ormiston. How said you, that his groom here had the keys?

Bothwell. That under door which lets us down lacks none;
There is no lock to palter with; it needs
But leave the bolt undrawn; and yesterday
By the queen's order was the door removed
At bottom of the stair, to be instead
A cover for his bath-vat; so there stands

But the main door now.

Hepburn. That was well devised:
She sleeps beneath his chamber here to-night?

Bothwell. Ay, to the west.

Hay. She has the stouter heart.
I have trod as deep in the red wash o' the wars
As who walks reddest, yet I could not sleep,
I doubt, with next night's dead man overhead.

Bothwell. We are past the season of divided wills;
Where but one thought is, nothing to be done
Has power to hurt the heart that holds it fast
Or leave the purpose weaker by a wound
Given it of doubt or afterthought: we have
One thing to do, one eye to see it, one hand
To pluck it from the occasion; what he wills
None but a fool would mix his will to achieve
With pain and fear; the mind once shaped and set
That works and yet looks back and weeps to do
Is but half man's; and all a man's hath she.

Hepburn. Yet woman moulded outward, clothed upon
As 'twere with feminine raiment, touched with thoughts
Of female-coloured fashion, woman's craft:
She sees and thinks on what could touch not us
Nor graze in passing even our skirts of sense:
Takes order for the hangings of his bed
Whom we must kill to her hand, lest water soil
The sable velvet from his bath, and bids
Pluck down and save them; such slight things and strange

As take the thought and hold the eye of girls
Her soul, as full of great things as it is,
As large and fiery, bright and passionate,
Takes no less thought for, and hath heed of these
No less than of high deed and deep desire
Beyond where sight can scale or thought can dive
Of narrower eye and shallower spirit than hers.

Bothwell. Most royal is she, but of soul not all
Uncurbable, nor of all shafts that fly
Scatheless, nor of all shots invulnerable;
She had no part else and no power in us,
No part in all that mingling makes up man,
No power upon our earth who are earthlier made;
She has the more might on men's ways of soul
Not being almighty, nor from all man's moods
Divided, but as passion-touched and mixed
With all such moods as men are; nay, not these,
But such as bear the rule of these and lead
Which way they will—women's; and being so mixed
She is even the more entire, more whole and strong,
Herself and no self other. She nor I
Live now on thoughts and words; the deed it is,
Our deed alone we live by, till being done
It leave us time for life that deals with these.
I will be with you ere night fall again
Within the town-wall; thither get you now,
And doubt not of us.

Ormiston. Doubt not you to find
All ready by the night and need: farewell.

[*Exeunt all but* BOTHWELL.

Bothwell. The time is breathless; earth sees heaven as chill
In the after air declining from high day.
I would the winds would muster, or the sun
Show half an eye-blink of his face that hangs
Now downward to the sea, curbed in with cloud,
And with a brief breath fire the rack that flies.
Why should not flame break over Arthur's Seat
This hour, and all the heaven with burning tongues
Cry from the world's height to the under line
That ends it for us gazing? If the sky
Had speech as it hath fire, or night or day
Voice to declare God's pleasure or his wrath
With their dumb lips of light, from moon or sun
Or the mute mouths of stars, would earth that heard
Take thought and counsel of the cause, to stir
Men's hearts up for our deed's sake here? I am wrought
Out of myself even by this pause and peace
In heaven and earth, that will not know of us
Nor what we compass; in this face of things,
Here in this eye of everduring life
That changes not in changing, fear and hope,
The life we live, the life we take, alike
Decline and dwindle from the shape they held,
Their import and significance; all seem
Less good and evil, worth less hate and love,
Than we would have them for our high heart's sake.
How shall this day when all these days are done
Seem to me standing where it sets my feet?
Nay, whence shall I behold it? or who knows

What crest or chasm, what pit or pinnacle,
Shall feel my foot or gulf my body down,
Bear up or break me falling? Fall or stand,
At least I live not as the beasts that serve,
But with a king's life or man's death at last
Make all my travails perfect; and a queen,
The fairest face I have loved and fieriest heart,
Shines with my star or sets.

Enter PARIS.

What sends she now?

Paris. I came to know if you stand fixed indeed, Sir, for to-morrow.

Bothwell. For to-morrow, man;
What ails him at to-morrow?

Paris. My dread lord,
Nought ails me but as part of your design;
But I beseech you by your trust of me,
What says this while my lord of Murray?

Bothwell. He!
He will nor help nor hinder—but all's one.

Paris. He is wise.

Bothwell. But is it to tell me he is wise
That you bestow your own wise tongue on me?
Came you to advise me or to show my trust
How cracked a casket I have closed it in
Who trusted in so white a heart as yours?

Paris. I have a message——

Bothwell. Well, the message, then;
And as you are wise, make me not wroth to-day,

Who am but foolish.

Paris. Sir, the queen by me
Wills you to know that from her husband's mouth
She is assured there came here yesterday
To him her brother, Abbot of St. Cross,
To warn him of some danger.

Bothwell. From his mouth!
Had ever mouth such hunger to eat dust?
Well, it shall soon be filled and shut; what else?

Paris. She has taxed hereof her brother——

Bothwell. What, by word?

Paris. No, but by note she let him wist she knew it.
Now he denies again his word aloud——

Bothwell. He does the wiselier; there your tongue struck right;
She has wise men to brethren.

Paris. And desires
To prove it on the accuser's body, being
Once whole again to meet him.

Bothwell. A fair proof:
Doth either sword seek mine for second?

Paris. Nay;
But the queen bade me tell you he should go
To her lord's chamber for his challenges' sake
And do that thing ye wot of.

Bothwell. Tell the queen
I will speak to him. We must not mar our hand;
Say I will see him before the morrow morn.
Howbeit, it shall be well but for a night
To put our present purpose back, and see

If chance or craft will mend our hand again.
Who strikes most sure strikes deepest; say I go
To try this brother's edge; if he be sure,
He shall well serve us as a glove to wear
And strike, and have the whiter hands to show.
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE XIX.—DARNLEY'S CHAMBER.

DARNLEY *and* NELSON.

Darnley. I never had such evil dreams as now.
Save for the terror of them and after pain,
I durst well swear I had not slept to-night.
Nelson. You have slept seven hours.
Darnley. I have been seven years in hell;
Mine eyes are full yet of the flames, my flesh
Feels creep the fire upon it; even my heart
Is as a sere leaf shrunken.
Nelson. Being awake,
Let not it move you.
Darnley. Nay, it shall not move.
Yet were they dreams to shake with waking fear
A sounder state than mine is.
Nelson. Sir, what dreams?
Darnley. No matter what: I'll tell thee yet some part,
That thou may'st know I shrink not for no cause.
I dreamed this bed here was a boat adrift
Wherein one sat with me who played and sang,
Yet of his cittern I could hear no note

Nor in what speech he sang inaudibly,
But watched his working fingers and quick lips
As with a passionate and loathing fear,
And could not speak nor smite him; and methought
That this was David; and he knew my heart,
How fain I would have smitten him, and laughed
As 'twere to mock my helpless hands and hate.
So drove we toward a rock whereon one sat
Singing, that all the highest air of heaven
Was kindled into light therewith, and shone
As with a double dawn; stars east and west
Lightened with love to hear her, and the sky
Brake in red bloom as leaf-buds break in spring,
But these bore fires for blossoms: then awhile
My heart too kindled and sprang up and sang
And made sweet music in me, to keep time
With that swift singing; then as fire drops down
Dropped, and was quenched, and in joy's stead I felt
Fear ache in me like hunger; and I saw
These were not stars nor overhead was heaven,
But a blind vault more thick and gross than earth,
The nether firmament that roofs in hell,
And those hot lights were of lost souls, and this
The sea of tears and fire below the world
That still must wash and cleanse not of one curse
The far foul strands with all its wandering brine:
And as we drove I felt the shallop's sides,
Sapped by the burning water, plank from plank
Severing; and fain I would have cried on God,
But that the rank air took me by the throat;

And ever she that sat on the sea-rock
Sang, and about her all the reefs were white
With bones of men whose souls were turned to fire;
And if she were or were not what I thought
Meseemed we drew not near enough to know;
For ere we came to split upon that reef
The sundering planks opened, and through their breach
Swarmed in the dense surf of the dolorous sea
With hands that plucked and tongues thrust out at us,
And fastened on me flamelike, that my flesh
Was molten as with earthly fire, and dropped
From naked bone and sinew; but mine eyes
The hot surf seared not, nor put out my sense;
For I beheld and heard out of the surge
Voices that shrieked and heads that rose, and knew
Whose all they were, and whence their wrath at me;
For all these cried upon me that mine ears
Rang, and my brain was like as beaten brass,
Vibrating; and the froth of that foul tide
Was as their spittle shot in my full face
That burnt it; and with breast and flanks distent
I strained myself to curse them back, and lacked
Breath; the sore surge throttled my tongueless speech,
Though its weight buoyed my dipping chin, that sank
No lower than where my lips were burnt with brine
And my throat clenched fast of the strangling sea,
Till I swam short with sick strokes, as one might
Whose hands were maimed; then mine ill spirit of sleep
Shifted, and showed me as a garden walled,
Wherein I stood naked, a shipwrecked man,

Stunned yet and staggered from the sea, and soiled
With all the weed and scurf of the gross wave
Whose breach had cast me broken on that shore :
And one came like a god in woman's flesh
And took mine eyes with hers, and gave me fruit
As red as fire, but full of worms within
That crawled and gendered ; and she gave me wine,
But in the cup a toad was ; and she said,
Eat, and I ate, and *Drink*, and I did drink,
And sickened ; then came one with spur on heel
Red from his horse o'erridden, smeared with dust,
And took my hand to lead me as to rest,
Being bruised yet from the sea-breach ; and his hand
Was as of molten iron wherein mine
Was as a brand in fire ; and at his feet
The earth split, and I saw within the gulf
As in clear water mine own writhen face,
Eaten of worms and living ; then I woke.

Nelson. It was a foul and formless dream, my lord,
With no soul in it.

Darnley. Nay, I think it had not.
And I did mind me waking how the queen
Sang me a song of shipwreck, and strange seas,
And love adrift by night, and fires burnt out
That shine but for a song's length ; I did think
It was this singing made up half my dream.
For there was talk of storms in it, and stars,
And broken ships, and death that rode in the air :
So was there in my dream. What step comes here ?

Enter ROBERT STUART.

Robert Stuart. I come to change less than a word with you,
And take my leave for all your rest of life.

Darnley. I will not speak alone with you again:
Stay by me there.

Robert Stuart. Have you not armour on?
You should not sleep with sword ungirt on thigh,
Lest one should fall upon you. For this time
I come indeed to see if you be man
Or ever knew beyond the naked name
What grace and office should belong to man
Or purpose to his sword. Reply not yet;
I know you are sick, weak, pitiful, half dead,
And with the ingrained infection of your soul
Its bodily house grown rotten; all you will;
You cannot swear yourself that piteous thing
That I will not believe you wretcheder;
No flesh could harbour such a worm alive
As this thing in you taken for a soul,
And 'scape corruption; but if you shall live
To stand again afoot and strike one stroke
For your own hand and head, you shall fight with me
Or wear the lie writ red upon your face
With my hand's buffet, that you spake who said
I had given you note of danger from the queen.

Darnley. Is it a plot, her plot upon me? Sir,
By God, I never said so; what I said
I have heart and sword to uphold against all swords,

And kill you if I might as many times
As you shall iterate on me this for true
Which is most false. When I may stand and go——
Robert Stuart. Yea, then shall we see fighting.
But as now
You can but swear you said not this of me?
Darnley. I am not bound to swear it or unswear
At any bidding; but so much I will—
That you may see no hot foul words of yours
Have quenched in me the old thought of fellowship—
As swear again I said but what I might
With honour and clear heart: I spake no word
To bring you in suspicion, or to turn
Thwart eyes upon you of men's jealousies
Or cast you out of favour with the queen;
I said but you did warn me of my life,
As being my fast friend still, I thanked you for it—
I know not what she says I said—but this
I know, I spake no treason of you. See,
This is a foolish wind of wrath that shakes
And wrecks your faith in me, mine own in you
Being firm and flawless; what you have said, you have said;
And what I have spoken of you was no more
Than I had right to speak and rest your friend.
Robert Stuart. Will you fight with me to maintain so much?
Darnley. If I might rise I would put off my state
To stand against you equal; you did say it,
That I was even as one the law damns dead

And she was parcel of my peril.

Robert Stuart. Ay!

You said so to her?

Darnley. She will not say I did.

Robert Stuart. Plight not your faith to that; I am assured

You said so, and so lied; and this last time
I bind you yet to meet me on this cause
Or bear the lie about you as a badge.

Darnley. By God, I will grow strong to fight with you.

Robert Stuart. If I shall see your living face again,
It shall be as mine enemy's; foot to foot
And hand to mortal hand we twain will meet,
Or ere the day dawn I shall see you dead.

Darnley. I am like to die, then? and your warlike words

Have so much iron in them, and your heart
Such daring to provoke one wellnigh dead?
I wist your tongue would move more tenderly
If I had now my strength of natural hand
And body to bear arms: but these shall come,
And you change face and lower your look to see.

Robert Stuart. I will abide my peril; do you the like,

You shall do wisely; should I say farewell,
It were to bid you fare not as they do
Who are of your kind or of your fortune; yet
I bid you, sir, fare better than I think. [*Exit.*

Darnley. Ay, you think venomously. What hour to-day

Should the queen come?

Nelson. To-night your highness knows
Her man Sebastian weds a maid of hers,
And she makes feast for them in Holyrood
With masque and music; having early supped,
She will be here somewhile with certain lords
To visit you, and so pass back ere night.

Darnley. She shall not make so much, when I am revived,
Of outland folk and fiddlers, who should have
Too much of them by this. I would she had come
To see me turn the lie back on his lips.
I did not answer as I might, being whole,
But yet not like a sick man, ha? like one
Whose wit and heart lie sick too with his flesh?

Nelson. Nay, with your natural spirit of speech you spoke,
With the same heart and tongue you have in health.

Darnley. I think I did; I would she had come betimes.

SCENE XX.—THE GARDEN BEHIND KIRK OF FIELD.

BOTHWELL, ORMISTON, HAY.

Bothwell. Did I not bid them spare no speed? the devil
I think has maimed their feet in my despite,
To keep a knave so piteous out of hell.
By God, it will be moonrise ere they come.

Ormiston. Tush, man! the night is close.

Bothwell. Ay, close and safe
As is the lock of a girl's maidenhood
When the gold key turns in it. They halt like jades;
God plague their laggard limbs with goads of fire!
Must they fall spavined now?

Hay. Here come they three,
And with charged hands; be not so outward hot,
But as their charge is ere we give it fire.

Bothwell. Teach your own tongue to take your tune, not mine.

Enter HEPBURN *with Servants.*

Have you some devil's cramp in your bones, to crawl
At this worm's race? Set down your load and go.
[*Exeunt Servants.*
What lamed these knaves' feet or belated you,
To hold us here thus till the moon were up?

Hepburn. 'Tis not yet risen; and your own word it was
Withheld us till the west should cast off red.

Bothwell. Well, we have time. Ye three are hands enough
To bear this down and strew it within the vault
While I go help the queen here bide her hour
Till you send Paris to me for a sign.
Take heed there be no noise. Let but two stay
To fire the train; you, cousin, for my love
Shall be one hand thereto. Pass in, and see
Ye go down sure and softly. From this gate
Ye know the passage under; go, and speed. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE XXI.—DARNLEY'S CHAMBER.

The QUEEN, DARNLEY, *Earls of* CASSILIS, HUNTLEY, *and* ARGYLE.

Queen. But I must chide you for one thing, my lord,
That you would hold your servant Duram here
Though it be for love you bear him ; he is sick,
And should not sleep nor watch with you to-night,
You do not well to keep him from the town
Against his health, who should take physic there
And come back whole to serve you.

Darnley. Let him go.
I did but bid him leave me not alone ;
I will have one for service at my hand.

Queen. Have you no more but just this young man gone
Whom I bade go even where was best for him ?
Let your page lie at hand here.

Darnley. Nay, I will.
You sent off Alexander ?

Queen. He was sick ;
We should show care of them we take to grace
More friendlike than by cherishing ourselves
With their forced company ; the grace is more
To take thought for them whom we hold in trust
Than still to exact their service, tax their faith,
Whose faith and service we that lean thereon
Should put to no more toil and pain than needs,
Requiting love with labour.

Darnley. You say well;
But what should ail him? save that yesterday
He found his bed-straw here by chance afire
And flung it out at window; on which plea
He would not lie to-night here, till I bade him
Sleep with me as aforetime, being of all
The man bound closest to my love and trust;
Then first he spake of sickness, as you heard
Who sat between us. Nay, but let him go;
The boy shall serve to sleep here.

Queen. Sickness makes
All wills to serve it like necessity;
Witness my will to keep my brother here
Whom his wife's sickness at St. Andrew's now
Parts from our feasts and counsels, caught up hence
As if a wind had rapt him.

Darnley. She is sick too—
The Lady Murray?

Queen. Nigh to death, he says;
I know not: who knows how near death he walks
Who treads as now most upright in the sun?

Argyle. Why have we death and sickness in our mouths
Who come forth of a feast not ended yet
That in good time recalls us?

Queen. Presently.
I would you were in health to dance me down
To-night but for the bride's sake; for the groom,
He may live easier that you grace him not
Nor gall with favour or with jealousy.

Darnley. We twain shall see this night out otherwise.

Queen. I am sure you shall see more of rest than I.

Darnley. Except I watch for sickness' sake all night.

Queen. That shall you not; I charge you on my love
Sleep sound for my sake.

Enter BOTHWELL.

Are not you the bell
That strikes the hour to sunder us, my lord?

Bothwell. Madam, I strike not yet.

Queen. The better; sit,
And make no sound of parting till your hour,
No timeless note of severance. My fair lord,
Have you no fair word for your noble guests?

Darnley. I pray you, sirs, of your own gentleness,
Lay it not to my discourtesy for shame
That I can but thus sickly entertain
The grace ye do me; that I meet it so,
Impute not to my will that is myself
But to my weakness that is none of me
Save as our enemy may be part of us,
And so forgive it.

Huntley. Sir, we are fain to see
Even in your gracious words that speak you ill
Some spirit of health already.

Cassilis. I would pledge
My name and word you shall not long lie sick
Who bear yourself thus lordlike. [*Noise below.*

Queen. Ah! my heart—
It wrings me here in passing; pardon me.

Bothwell. God's lightning burn them ! will they mar
me now? [*Aside, and exit.*

Darnley. Heard you no noise?

Argyle. Where?

Queen. Some one stirred below;
A chair thrown down or such-like.

Darnley. Nay, I caught
A rush and rattle as——

Cassilis. Of pebble-stones?

Darnley. Where is my lord gone forth?

Queen. Why are you moved?

Darnley. I am not moved; I am no fearful fool
To shake and whiten as a winter tree
With no more wind than this is.

Queen. Do you think
It is your counsellor come back in wrath
To warn again and threaten?

Darnley. Nay, for him
I think he hath learnt a lesson of my rede
To vex his soul and trouble me no more.

Re-enter BOTHWELL.

Queen. What deadly news now of what danger, sir?

Bothwell. Some fellow bearing faggots for the fire
Slipt at the threshold: I have admonished him
What din his knaveship made even in our ears
As if he had the devil there in his hands.

Queen (*aside*). It was of them?

Bothwell (*aside*). Ay, hell take hold on them,
It was their din, God thank them for it with fire,

Our careful helpers; but I have made them safe:
The train is wellnigh laid now: what remains
To strew I have charged them shed without more sound
Than where the snow strikes.

Darnley. Must you part indeed?

Queen. They look for us ere long.

Darnley. Now know I not
What I would give to hold you here a night,
Even half my life I think, and know not why.

Queen. That were too much. I slept here yesterday;
Were you the better for me?

Darnley. Ay, and no;
I deemed I was the better till I slept,
And then——

Queen. Why, did my being here break your sleep?
It shall not break to-night then.

Enter PARIS, *and stands at the door.*

Bothwell (*aside to* ARGYLE). Time is come;
Touch him, and give the sign.

Darnley. The air turns sharp;
There came a wind as chill as from the pit.
Why do you fix your eyes so fast on me?

Queen. Not out of mind to mar your sleep again.

Darnley. I will not sleep alone.

Queen. Ay, will you not?
The town looks like a smoke whose flame is out,
Deformed of night, defaced and featureless,
Dull as the dead fume of a fallen fire.
There starts out of the cloud a climbing star,

And there is caught and slain.

Darnley. Why gaze you so?

Queen. I looked to see if there should rise again
Out of its timeless grave the mounting light
That so was overtaken. We must part;
Keep with this kiss this ring again for me
Till I shall ask it of you; and good night.

Darnley. A good night it may be to folk that feast;
I see not how it shall be good to me.

Queen. It may be better. I must be some hour
Again among the masquers: you that sleep
Shall hear no noise and see no company.

Enter NELSON.

For this one night here comes your chamberlain:
Good rest with you. 'Twas just this time last year
David was slain.

Darnley. Why tell you me of that?

Queen. This very time as now. Good night, my lord.

[*Exeunt all but* DARNLEY *and* NELSON.

Darnley. What folk remain by me?

Nelson. Sir, four of us:
Myself and Seymour, Taylor and his boy.

Darnley. Let Taylor sleep here in my room to-night,
You three in the south gallery.

Nelson. Well, my lord.

Darnley. I am left here very lonely. She was kind,
Most kind she was; but what should make her speak
Of David's slaying?

Nelson. A word that shot by chance;

A shaft of thought that grazed her and flew by.

Darnley. Why should she tell me of it? My heart runs low;
As if my blood beat out of tune with life,
I feel the veins shuddering shrink in, and all
My body seems a burden to my soul.
Come, I will think not that way.

Re-enter PARIS.

Paris. Sir, the queen,
Having forgot for haste in parting hence
Her outer cloak of fur, hath sent me for it,
Lest this night's weather strike her blood acold.

Darnley. Take it and go. (*Exit* PARIS.) I do not like their eyes,
These foreign folk's that serve her. Is it cold?
I feel cold here.

Nelson. A fair sharp night, my lord;
And the air less cumbered than it was with cloud.

Darnley. I find no night of all nights fair to me;
I am sick here at my heart all the dark hours.
Give me the book there. Ay, my book of psalms?
What day is this?

Nelson. The ninth of February.

Darnley. How says it of God's foes, they were afraid
Where no fear was? That am not I: my fear
Dies without food. I am not as were these.
I prithee tell me, of thine honest heart,
Think'st thou I have no cause to feed my fear,
Or keep the bitter life in it alive?

Nelson. I know not, sir; but what you give it of food
Is so much taken from your health of heart
That goes to starve your spirit of likely life.
Darnley. Why then I will not feed it with false thoughts.
Call here my chamber-fellow. If the heart

Enter TAYLOR.

Be but the servant of chance cold and heat,
And the brain bear not rule upon the blood,
We are beasts who call us men. Thomas, good night.
[*Exit* NELSON.
What, shall we watch awhile?
Taylor. So please your grace.
Darnley. I have more mind to sleep than power to sleep;
Some unrest in me fights against my rest.
Come hither, Will. Of all thy fellows here
I think thou lov'st me; fain am I to think;
I would not live unloved of all men born;
I hope I shall not. Dost thou feel to-night
Thy living blood and spirit at ease in thee?
Taylor. Surely, my lord.
Darnley. I would thy lord did too.
This is a bitter writing where he saith
How in his prayer he mourns, and hath his heart
Disquieted within him; and again,
The fear of death is fallen upon him, see,
And fearfulness and trembling, as is writ,
Are come upon him, and an horrible dread

Hath him o'erwhelmed: O that I had, saith he,
Wings like a dove! then would I flee away,
And be at rest; would get me then far off
And bide within the wilderness, it saith,
I would make haste to escape. Lo, here am I,
That bide as in a wilderness indeed
And have not wings to bear me forth of fear,
Nor is it an open enemy, he saith,
Hath done me this dishonour: (what hath put
This deadly scripture in mine eye to-night?)
For then I could have borne it; but it was
Even thou, mine own familiar friend, with whom
I took sweet counsel; in the house of God
We walked as friends. Ay, in God's house it was
That we joined hands, even she, my wife and I,
Who took but now sweet counsel mouth to mouth
And kissed as friends together. Wouldst thou think,
She set this ring at parting on my hand
And to my lips her lips? and then she spake
Words of that last year's slaughter. O God, God,
I know not if it be not of thy will
My heart begins to pass into her heart,
Mine eye to read within her eye, and find
Therein a deadlier scripture. Must it be
That I so late should waken, and so young
Die? for I wake as out of sleep to death.
Is there no hand or heart on earth to help?
Mother! my mother! hast thou heart nor hand
To save thy son, to take me hence away,
Far off, and hide me? But I was thy son,

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That lay between thy breasts and drank of thee,
And I thy son it is they seek to slay.
My God, my God, how shall they murder me?

Taylor. I pray you, comfort your own heart, my lord;

Your passion drives your manhood out of you.

Darnley. I know it doth; I am hare-hearted, for
The hunters are upon me. There—and there—
I hear them questing. I shall die, man—die,
And never see the sun more; ay, this hour
Will they come in and slay me. O great God,
Sweet Jesus, will you have me die this death,
Such death as never man before has died?
See how they will not let me pray to you
To take my soul out of their fangs and hell—
Will you not make the sun rise for my sake
That I may see you in the dawn and live
And know the grace that God hath ere I die?

Taylor. Sir, for God's love——

Darnley. I say I hear their feet—
Thou hast no ears—God hath no ears for me
Nor eyes to look upon me—hands he hath,
Their bloody hands to smite with, and her heart
Is his toward me to slay me. Let them come;
How do men die? but I so trapped alive—
O, I shall die a dog's death and no man's.
Mary, by Christ whose mother's was your name,
Slay me not! God, turn off from me that heart—
Out of her hands, God, God, deliver me!

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

JANE GORDON.

Time: from February 10 to June 11, 1567.

ACT III.

Scene I.—Bothwell's Apartment in Holyrood.

Bothwell, Ormiston, Hepburn of Bolton, *and other Gentlemen.*

Bothwell. Is my knave sent for to me from the queen?
Hepburn. Ay, my good lord.
Bothwell. I had happier thoughts of him
Who served us but unhappily last night:
This Paris had been faithful, and his tongue
That might have struck a sting into my fame
Had done me loyal service, and let fly
No word to bring me in disgrace of men
When I stood friendless; for which cause ye know
I gave him place with the queen's chamberlains
And promise of more furtherance; but this thing
Has turned his six years' service into dust
And made his faith as running water slip
Between my hands that held it for a staff;
For since I first brake with him of the deed
He hath been for fear besotted like a beast.
Ormiston. 'Faith, he was heavy enough of cheer last night,

When you came forth, and the queen parted thence
And hither to the bridal.

Bothwell. By this hand,
I came upon him glooming and withdrawn
Up in a nook with face as of one hanged,
And asked what ailed him to put on that gloom
Or make such countenance there before the queen?
And I would handle him in such sort, I said,
As he was never in his life; by God,
I had the mind to do it; and he, *My lord,*
I care not what thing now ye do to me,
And craved he might get thence to bed, as sick,
But that I would not: then as ye twain saw
When came the wind and thunder of the blast
That blew the fool forth who took wing for death,
Down my knave drops me flatlong, with his hair
Aghast as hedgehogs' prickles, and *Alas,*
My lord, what thing is this? and *He had seen*
Great enterprises, marry, *and many of them,*
But never one that scared him so as this;
And such a thing would never have good end,
And I should see it; by God I had a will
To have set my dagger here into him, but yet
I drew it not forth.

Ormiston. I doubt you did not well;
'Tis of such stuff that time makes talebearers.

Bothwell. I would not strike him for old service' sake,
Were he more dangerous to me; but, God help,
What hurt here can he do us? I tell you, sirs,

I think my star that was not swift to rise
But hung this long time strangled in dead cloud
Is even by this a fire in heaven, and hath
The heat and light in it of this dead man's
That it hath drunk up as a dew-drop drawn
Into the red mid heat of its own heart;
And ye that walk by light of it shall stand
With morning on the footless mountain-tops
Crowned.

Hepburn. There are crags yet slippery to be clomb,
And scaurs to rend their knees and fêet who rise.

Bothwell. I have my hand here on the throat of time,
And hold mine hour of fortune by the hair.
Had I let slip this season I had fallen
Naked and sheer to break myself on death,
A cragsman crushed at the cliff's foot; but now
Chance cannot trip me, if I look not down
And let mine eye swim back among slain fears
To reckon up dead dangers; but I look
High up as is the light, higher than your eyes,
Beyond all eagles' aeries, to the sun.

Ormiston. You will be king?

Bothwell. Was I not crowned last night?
The hand that gave those dead stones wings to fly
Gave wings too to my fortune, and the fire
That sprang then in our faces, on my head
Was as the gold forefigured on a king's.

Enter PARIS.

What says the queen? why shak'st thou like a cur?
Speak, beast, or beastlike shalt thou fare with me;
Hast thou not seen her?

Paris. Ay, my lord.

Bothwell. Ay, dog?
What said she to those gaping eyes of thine?

Paris. My lord, I found her in her mourning bed
New-hung with black; her looks were fresh and staid;
Her fast being broken only with an egg,
Ere she addressed herself again to sleep
She spake but three words with me of yourself,
How might you fare, and when she rose by noon
You should come to her; no more.

Bothwell. So let her sleep;
There are that watch for her. For thine own part,
I charge thee tell me one thing: in thy life
Didst thou pledge ever promise or plight faith
To that dead mask of kingship?

Paris. Nay, my lord.

Bothwell. Seest thou not now these gentlemen my friends?
Not one of them but for troth's sake to me
And loving service hath cast all things off
To do as I shall and to fare as I;
And if thou think'st, whom no faith bound nor love
To serve that fool or come 'twixt hell and him
To buckler him from burning—if thou think'st,
That art my servant, thou hast sinned toward God
In our offence, this lies not to thy charge

But mine who caused thee do it, and all the lords'
Who with me took this work in all their hands.
And if now thou have will to go thy way,
Thou shalt depart right soon with recompense;
But for all pains that can be put to thee
Thou must not take this on thy tongue again.

Paris. My lord, I will not.

Bothwell. Sirs, with me it rests
To take some order for the burial soon
When the queen's eye hath dwelt upon him dead,
As shall be, lest men say for shame or fear
She would not see him; then with all privy speed
He shall by night be given here to the worms.
His raiment and his horses will I take
By the queen's gift; for being now highest in place
I will present me kinglike to the time
And come before men royal, who shall know
I stand here where he stood in all their sight;
So seeing at once if I be lord or no
He that shall hate me risen shall need take heart
To strike betimes, or strike not. At this hour
Bold heart, swift hand, are wiser than wise brain.
I must be seen of all men's fear or hate,
And as I am seen must see them and smite down
Or lie for ever naked underfoot
Down in the dark for them to triumph on.
That will I not; but who shall overthrow
Must kill me kingly, sworded hand to hand,
Not snared with gin or limetwig as a fool,
Nor hurled by night up howling into heaven,
But in the sun's eye weaponed. Some of you

Go forth and find what noise is in the streets,
What rumours and how tempered on men's tongues:
When I pass out among them I will take
Some fifty with me to my guard, and ride
As might their king ride. Be it proclaimed abroad
In mine own name and Maitland's and Argyle's
Two thousand pounds shall pay that good man's pains
Who shall produce the murderers of our king
For just and sudden judgment. In few days,
If Mar be not mine unfriend and his own,
Who holds the keys of Stirling, we shall pass
With some of counsel thither, and there bide
Till the first reek of rumour have blown by,
Then call in spring our parliament again.

Hepburn. Your heart of hope is great; with God to friend,
A man could speed no better than your hope.

Bothwell. I tell thee, God is in that man's right hand
Whose heart knows when to strike and when to stay.
I swear I would not ask more hope of heaven
Than of mine own heart which puts fire to me
And of mine own eye which discerns my day.
And seeing the hope wherein I go now forth
Is of their giving, if I live or die,
With God to friend or unfriend, quick or dead
I shall not wake nor sleep with them that fear
Whose lives are as leaves wavering in a wind,
But as a man foiled or a man enthroned
That was not fooled of fortune nor of fear. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—ANOTHER ROOM IN THE SAME.

The body of DARNLEY *lying on a bier. Two men in attendance.*

First Attendant. There is no wound.

Second Attendant. Nor hath the fire caught here ;
This gown about him is not singed ; his face
Is clenched together, but on hair nor cheek
Has flame laid even a finger ; each limb whole
And nothing of him shattered but the life.
How comes he dead?

First Attendant. Tush, tush ! he died by chance.
Take thou no pain to know it. For mine own mind,
I think it was his sickness which being full
Broke as a plague-spot breaks and shattered him
And with his fleshly house the house of stone
Which held him dying ; his malady it was
That burst the walls in sunder and sent up
A ruin of flaming roofs and floors afire.

Second Attendant. Was not his chamber-fellow's corpse as his ?

First Attendant. Ay, woundless as they say and unconsumed ;
I know not surely. But the blast that made
The good town ring and rock here through her streets
Shook not all sleepers in the house to death ;
Three souls have crept forth of the wreck alive
That slept without his chamber.

Second Attendant. What say these ?

First Attendant. What should they say, with thanks
for their own hap,
But that this chance is dire and this man dead?
There is no more yet for sage lips to say,
That would not timeless be stopped up with earth.

Enter the QUEEN *and* BOTHWELL.

Queen. Leave us, and after take your charge again.
First Attendant. We must forbear her till her moan
be made. (*Aside.*) [*Exeunt Attendants.*
Queen. Let me look on him. It is marred not
much;
This was a fair face of a boy's alive.
Bothwell. It had been better had he died ere man.
Queen. That hardly was he yesterday; a man!
What heart, what brain of manhood had God sown
In this poor fair fool's flesh to bear him fruit?
What seed of spirit or counsel? what good hope
That might have put forth flower in any sun?
We have plucked none up who cut him off at root,
But a tare only or a thorn. His cheek
Is not much changed, though since I wedded him
His eyes had shrunken and his lips grown wan
With sickness and ill living. Yesterday,
Man or no man, this was a living soul;
What is this now? This tongue that mourned to me,
These lips that mine were mixed with, these blind eyes
That fastened on me following, these void hands
That never plighted faith with man and kept,
Poor hands that paddled in the sloughs of shame,

Poor lips athirst for women's lips and wine,
Poor tongue that lied, poor eyes that looked askant
And had no heart to face men's wrath or love
As who could answer either,—what work now
Doth that poor spirit which moved them? To what use
Of evil or good should hell put this or heaven,
Or with what fire of purgatory annealed
Shall it be clean and strong, yet keep in it
One grain for witness of what seed it was,
One thread, one shred enwoven with it alive,
To show what stuff time spun it of, and rent?
I have more pity such things should be born
Than of his death; yea, more than I had hate,
Living, of him.

Bothwell. Since hate nor pity now
Or helps or hurts him, were we not as wise
To take but counsel for the day's work here
And put thought of him with him underground?

Queen. I do but cast once more away on him
The last thought he will ever have of mine.
You should now love me well.

Bothwell. 'Ay should I, sweet.

Queen. I think you shall; it were more hard than death
You should not love me.

Bothwell. Nay, not possible.

Queen. I think God never set in flesh of man
Such heart as yours would be to love me not.

Bothwell. Will you give order for his funeral?

Queen. Ay.
But if you loved not—I would know that now
That I might die even this day, and my hands
Shed no more blood nor strive more for your sake;
For if I live whose life is of your love
I shall take on them more of toil and blood,
To stain and tire them labouring all their life.
I would not die bloodguiltier than is need,
With redder hands than these and wearier heart,
And have no love to cleanse and comfort them.
For this man, I forgive him.
Bothwell. For which fault?
Queen. That he touched ever and defiled my life
With life of his and death. I am fain to know
You do not love me for his sake the less
Who so have soiled me with him.
Bothwell. Shall I not
Swear it with him for sponsor to mine oath?
Queen. Kiss me before his face here for a sign.
Bothwell. You have strange doubts and dreams.
Queen. I will not have.
When part we hence, and whither?
Bothwell. I have word
Your careful warden, the grave lord of Mar,
Will hardly give my followers at your prayer
Place to come in to Stirling at our back.
Here now the streets begin to sound and swarm
So that my guard is now for more than pride;
Wherefore I hold it well we take with us
Some friends of our own counsel, as Argyle,

Huntley, my brother-in-law that shall be none,
With Maitland and the archbishop, and set forth
To the lord Seyton's, who shall give us house
Till this loud world fall stiller than it is.

Queen. Be it where you will, and how; do you but lead,
Would I not follow naked through the world?
For him of whose dead face mine eyes take leave
As my free soul of shameful thought on him,
Let him have private burial some fit night
By David whom he slew. I mind me now
'Tis not a year since I fled forth with him
Even through the graves where he shall lie alone,
And passing through their dusty deadly ways
For some few minutes of the rustling night
I felt his hand quake; he will quake not now
To sleep there all night long. See you to that.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—SEYTON CASTLE

LORD HERRIES *and* SIR JAMES MELVILLE.

Herries. So stands it, sir; she hath put into his hands
Besides the lordship of the port of Leith
The castle's government of Edinburgh,
Of Inchkeith and Blackness, three master keys
That keep the doors o' the kingdom; in Dunbar
He sits now lord, and gathers men to hold
By her next gift Dumbarton: while she sends
A privy message for a priest to plead

With the French king, that by his mother's mouth
And his own hand hath warned her, if her lord
Sleep unrevenged, she being so shamed henceforth
Must hold them for her enemies, and put off
All thought to flee for fear into their guard
From peril of her subjects—even to him
She sends for payment of her dower foregone
Wherewith to levy hireling bands in France
With but her babe for captain called, and be
Fenced round at least with all of these she may,
Of whose despatch none here must know before,
Nor, if these fail her, of her frustrate aim;
Then, ere her mourning month be here played out
With hound and horn and soldierlike delights
To recreate her natural heart and life,
She must repass to Holyrood and meet
The ambassador from England, Killegrew,
Who comes to find folk sorrowing and in fear
With counsel for our peril and our grief,
And falls upon us feasting; and to him
She plights her faith that by this parliament
Shall Bothwell have his trial, and the cause
Be sifted clear in the eyes of all good men;
Wherewith content he parts, or discontent,
I know not, but is gone; and she come back
Takes heed no more than of a harp unstrung
What plaint or plea, what charge or menace comes
From her lord's father, but to his demand
For convocation of the nobles made
Returns her word their house shall meet in spring,

And puts his charge by lightly as she may.
Of all this nothing in my mind goes well.

Melville. Nor aught in mine. Your fellows of her faith
Who stand as yet in England on her side
Will fall off from her, hearing what I doubt
All ears will hear too soon: I have shown it her
By letter sent me from a faithful Scot
That long hath wrought among them on her part
And freely thence wrote all his fear for me
To lay before her, and his grief to hear
Such bruit of her intent as could but slay
The opinion of her judgment, who must lose
By such design God's favour and her fame,
And in each kingdom that should kiss her hand
Each man's heart born her heritage, and miss
The noble mark she shot at; I, adjured
Of him that wrote to bring this in her eye,
Gave her to read it, which she gave again,
Silent; then came the secretary to me
A short while thence, and took me by the hand,
Desiring me as by the queen's desire
To let him see it, who had given him late to know
I had shown her a strange letter, and devised
By mine own counsel for Lord Bothwell's wreck;
And having read, What thing was in my mind,
He said, to do this, which being known to the earl,
As shortly there was need to fear it should,
Would cause him surely seek my life? and I,
It was a sore thing for true men to see

So good a princess run on utter wreck
And no man be so far concerned in her
As to forewarn of peril: he replied
As one who had newly left her wroth, I had done
More honestly than wisely; bade me fly
Ere the earl came up from dining; and being flown
I know he sought to slay me, who lay hid
Till his main rage was slackened; and the queen,
Who had made him swear to seek no scathe of mine
When at their meeting next she showed it him,
Chid him as who would cause her to be left
Of all her servants; then he swore anew
I should receive no harm; whereof again
Being advertised I spake with her, and showed
She had never done me so much wrong as this,
To make the letter a device of mine
Which came even whence I had given her word; and yet
Had it not come, I had held me bound to speak
Freely, with reverence and humility,
My thought as did that letter, being of mind
At one therewith; but she would give no ear;
Nor is there force in counsel or man's wit
To avert this ill she binds upon herself,
Who breaks the bonds in twain that hold her friends,
And fetters her own feet with gyves of steel,
When she hath need of them to stand or flee
Before the face of peril multiform
That lightens on us flamelike: you, my lord,
Whose love she hath proven, are not of me to learn

The immediate feature of it.

Herries. Alas, not I;
I have taken too much note thereof, and stand
Too near its fangs to live of them unscathed,
Except I make haste hence.

Melville. What haste, my lord?

Herries. I have spoken with her of their purpose blown
From lip to lip already on men's breath,
To loose the bonds that bind her lover yet
By witness of the lady of Buccleugh,
Who shall proclaim herself his paramour
And precontracted to him by promise-plight,
To prove his wife no lawful wife, but bound,
Will she or no, and love him not or love,
To sue divorce from him; if all this fail,
Then by remonstrance of their kindred blood
Found some four cousinships away, this bond
Shall melt or break that parts him from the queen.

Melville. Why, ere his marriage with the Lady Jane
She had her dispensation from the Pope,
For the blood mixed between them, of all bars
Which might have maimed it with impediment.

Herries. So had she, but they think to cover it
As with a veil of invalidity
Pretexted for pretence, or with dumb show
Darkly disclaimed; this shall not cumber them;
And they will buy compliance and goodwill
Of Huntley to his sister's putting off
By restoration of his forfeit lands.

Melville. All tongues i' the land will as one
mouth of fire
Cry death and shame against it.
Herries. So said I.
Melville. So said you to her?
Herries. I said so; whereat she,
As 'twere half smiling in a wondering shame,
Half mourning to be guiltlessly misjudged,
With fervent eyes' fall and with scornful lips
Protests me, never had she thought of it.
Wherefore I hold it ill to tarry here.
Melville. Your wisdom shall do well to spare no
speed,
But get it gone from eyeshot of them both.
Herries. I know it; yet would I plead again with
her,
For pity and honour of the imperilled state,
That should be shaken with her fall to death
And the crown shattered into shards of gold.
For as a wolf anhungered and awaked
That long hath slept and starved, with foodless dreams
Assuaging its blunt fangs through bloodless hours,
The common people, that in dumb dim rest,
With heartless hopes assuaging its blind heart,
Hath fed for ages on itself asleep,
Shows now the keen teeth and the kindled eyes
Of ravening heads innumerable, that gape
And glare about the wide ways of the world,
Seeking their meat of God; and if he fail,
Then of the devil that burns in minds of men

Rebellious, whom their heat of heart eats up
Till the fire fasten on authority
To lay red hands of ruin on all state
And leave in ashes empire; as of late
This Ket in England, and his like that swarm
At heel of the new creeds in Lutheran lands
To pluck the sun out of the heaven of rule,
And leave men dark and kingless. Hath not Knox
Struck with his fangs of speech on monarchy
No less than on the Church that first was stung,
Preaching for all men knowledge equally
And prostitute and perilous freedom shared
With all blear eyes, brute mouths, and unwashed hands,
That lust for change and take all fires for light,
Except the sun's wherein their fathers walked?
And shall not these at any breach break in
That flaws the sea-wall which forbade their sea
To drown all banks that bound it? She will make
Of all that lived in Scotland hers and ours
A ruin and republic of strewn wrecks,
Ranks rent, bonds broken, all things orderless,
A commonwealth of dead men's bones and dung,
Dust, mire, and blood, and one red rank of beasts
That rage and revel in equality.

Melville. 'Tis true, the commons are as waters chafed
Since this wind blew amongst them: wave by wave
It lifts their heads up, and the murmuring air
Breathes hard and blackens with the blast of change.

Herries. And were none touched with danger but herself,
This yet were pity enough for tears of blood,
So fair she is and less by place than kind
Royal, so high and so assured of spirit,
So full of all things all men love or fear,
Heart's light and fire, a soul born winged, with eyes
That mate the sun's eye and the lightning's; yea,
It were past count of pity, past men's thought,
That she should fall for love's light sake self-slain.
Melville. There were one way to serve her that would be
Most thankless, being thankworthiest; but none else.
Herries. That were no way for feet that would not walk
Red as her enemies' did, whose passage shook
With its near sound her life and fame; such ways
Let Morton take or Maitland's weaponed wit,
Whose words are swords.
Melville. It may be so they will.
Herries. Death?
Melville. Nay, who knows when death may come?
Herries. Why, they
Who strike the spur into his fleshless side,
Who prick him forward with their craft for goad,
Or put for sword their hatred in his hand.
They have done deeds of deadlier policy
Than make submissive show toward Bothwell here,
Then snare and slay him or put the queen in ward:
Would they do this they might be serviceable

But perilous must be, putting hand to work
That treads nigh treason though for loyalty.

Melville. Whoso may know their mind, it is not I.

Herries. She hath sent for Murray hither; in his eye
We may take note which way their faction looks.
If yet toward violence and red-handed craft,
This mood of hers will strip her for their strokes
Naked, and leave us handless that would fight
On her just side against them. God mend all!

Enter the QUEEN, BOTHWELL, SEYTON, *the* MARIES, *and Attendants.*

Queen. The wind has moved my blood like wine; I am full
Even to the heart's root of its spirit of life.
Flew not my hawk the last flight well, that sent
The tumbling hern down from her highest? I think
You have none better. Is our brother come?

Seyton. He is now alighting, madam.

Queen. By this hand,
I would when we must 'light from horse we might
Take wing instead, and so what time we live
Live ever at glad speed save when we sleep.
It points and edges the dull steel of life
To feel the blood and brain in us renew
By help of that life lifting us, and speed
That being not ours is mixed with us and serves.
I would hold counsel and wage war and reign
Not in walled chambers nor close pens of state,
But or in saddle or at sea, my steed

As a sea-wave beneath the wind and me,
Or the sea serving as a bitted steed
That springs like air and fire. Time comes, they say,
When we love rest, house-keeping sloth, and calms;
To me I think it will not come alive.

Herries. Madam, I would change yet one word with you
Ere I go hence or others take your ear.

Queen. So shall you, sir; yet is my heart too light,
And its live blood too merry from the chase,
And all my life too full of the air of joy
Whereon it mounts up falcon-like for prey
And hovers at its wings' width ere it strike,
To give wise words wise welcome; yet what grace
I may to your grave counsels will I show
And modesty of audience. Tell my brother
I shortly will receive him. [*Exeunt all but the* QUEEN *and* HERRIES.] My good lord,
It is for that old honour and true love
I bear your high name and your flawless faith
That yet mine ear makes way now for your words,
In trust they will not wound it for its pains
With any tuneless or intemperate breath.

Herries. Had I no heart, or in the heart I have
No love to serve you, madam, and no faith,
I had parted hence without more toil of tongue
Or strife of speech unpalatable and harsh
In ears made wide for music; but in me
Is heart enough to burn with fire of pain,
If not to lighten with that fire their eyes

For whose sake it consumes me, when I see
Danger and death masked as true men and bold
Attend about them with sheathed knives in hand
And shut mouths as of serpents. Let me not
Incense again your flame of spirit and scorn
With faint and void reiterance of dead words
That spent in vain their spirit before : I speak
Not now so much to move you as would God
I had the might to move, but of myself
Rather to save my soul of faith alive
And my deep heart of duty toward your grace
By speech though fruitless and by love though lost
That will not pass forth silent and give way
To loud-tongued ruin that shall speak too high
For ears to close against it. Queen of Scots,
Lady that have the loftiest life in hand
Even yet that ever was of queen on earth,
Last hope of men that hope through you in God,
Last comfort of his Church, light of his lamp
That men have nigh blown out with blasts of night;
O you to whose fair face and hand uplift
The treble-kingdomed islands should turn back
Out of the shadow of storm to follow them
And in the shadow of faith instead lie down
Beneath the wings that covered your crowned head,
Even hers that brood above her fold and yours,
The Church your mother's, that by no hand else
Looks yet to gather three lands in and save—
Who have the heart and the eye and the hour for this
Which to none other God may give again

So as you have them—you that should be writ
In all the royal records of the world
Saviour, the light and the right hand of God
Shown in a woman, to bring back and build
What was blown down or shed as dust on the air—
You that have spirit and mind to apprehend
And to that apprehension put swift hand,
Nor slow of soul nor fearful—you, our queen,
And England's heir, that should make higher on earth
The name of Scot than any star in heaven,
And on the cleft growth of two thorny stems
Bid one rose flower of Catholic royalty
Not to be plucked or trampled—O, will you,
So great, so fair and fearless as you are,
That were you no queen, or such other one
As no such high cause calls on, you would seem
Not less a thing made to heroic end,
A creature crowned and armed by God to bear
His witness to his work, and in man's eye
Stand signal-wise lighting the beaconed sea—
Will you put all this as a garment off
And change it like a vesture? By your life
Which is the life of this land's majesty,
And your high soul which is our spirit of hope,
Slay not all these; help them that trust in you;
Help God, lest we believe him for your sake
Ill-minded toward us for our sin, to turn
This empire to a populous wilderness,
A riotous desert where things vile are crowned,
And high made low and low things set on high,

And rule trod under with foul feet and bare,
And kingdom parcelled by hard hands and red;
Pity this people; give not up your realm
To its own madness that takes fire at yours
And lights its ruin at your own ruin, to run
By that blind light darkling to death and hell;
Cast not your name down under foot of men
For such ill cause as loveless love that is
Light lord of foolish women, or such will
As wherewith men self-slaughtered gird themselves.
For shame and pity and peril shall be they
Who shall attend and wed you to your will,
And the ring broken of the kingdom's peace
That is yet whole and circular as a crown
Shall be the new ring on your wedded hand.

Queen. Have I not said I never thought of it?

Herries. I but beseech you keep from thought of it,
Or from such show as puts it in men's minds.

Queen. If this be all your counsel or your care,
You crave but what you have; I have given no cause
By favour shown to faith and loyal hearts
For the evil-witted world to tax me of love.
Twice have you had mine ear now to this tale,
And thrice I pray you that you seek it not.

Herries. I shall no more. God keep your grace in joy!

Enter BOTHWELL *and* MURRAY.

Queen. Good morrow, brother; and you, my lord, good day,

Since you go hence.

Bothwell. Goes my lord from us yet?

Herries. Even now I take my leave. Farewell, my lords,
And God be with your counsels. [*Exit.*

Bothwell. Nay, he shall.
The queen was fain to have your voice, my lord,
Ere she go back to the distempered town.

Murray. That shall she have, sir.

Queen. Brother, we hear word
How the good town is troubled of lewd men
With libels writ and hung about the streets
That in our servants' name deface our own
With fierce invention: wherefore I desired
Your counsel with my lord here and good help
For satisfaction of well-willing men.

Murray. Even such will tell you it mislikes the town
That Lennox, as they say, should be debarred
From entrance save with six men and no more
To hold his cause up on the trial day,
And the main witness on his part refused
As under charge of treason for his words
Set forth in writing on the Tolbooth gates:
This makes them doubt of justice to be done
And brood or babble of devised delay,
With tongues and minds diverse and dangerous.

Queen. What,
Shall one proclaimed our traitor pass unscathed
To bear again false witness, for whose sake

The ports are guarded, and the skipper marked
For death who helps him from this kingdom forth
To mock the judgment whence he stands attaint
Of foregone treason, and must now stand free,
And the law loose him and receive his word
As a true man's and taintless? What are they
Whom by such witness Lennox would impeach
Besides my lord here who shall answer him?

Murray. James Balfour, and your outland serving-folk,
Sebastian, Joseph Rizzio, with two French,
John of Bordeaux, and Francis, of your train.

Queen. They shall have trial, and answer it.

Murray. 'Twere best
They did so soonest; time grows full of tongues;
There was one late went through the streets by night
With four or five accompanied for guard
That would let none take knowledge of him, crying
Of his own guilt most lamentably on God,
Lord, open heaven and pour down of thy wrath
Vengeance on me and them that have cut off
The innocent blood; whom the chief magistrates
Have seized and cast into the four thieves' pit;
But still his cry hangs in the common ear.

Queen. Some traitor hired or madman: but I sent
To seek the comfort of your hand and help
For weightier cause than of such tongues.

Murray. What cause?

Queen. That shall he show who bears most part therein;

Yet are you parcel of it, and I myself
For love of both and honour toward you. Speak.
[*To* BOTHWELL.

Bothwell. My lord, I doubt not but your heart conceived
Never that thing whereto being done you feared
To set your hand in sign; I therefore pray you
To look upon the charge for which I stand
In the land's eye accountable, as one
That was consenting with the rest our friends
To what for my poor profit was not done
Nor only plotted for no end but mine;
And for the part your honour has herein
To underwrite the bond that writes me safe
And set your name for seal upon my side.

Queen. So much would I beseech you too; the bond
By you subscribed here in my lord's defence
Shall be the signet of your faith and love
Set on my heart and his that honour you.

Murray. I would my duty might in all things serve
No less your honour than maintain mine own;
But I will set no hand to any bond
Shall bind me to defence or fellowship
Of deeds whereof I know myself no part.
I gave consent to no more than divorce
Between two hands mismated, king's and queen's,
Whereby the kingdom's heart was rent in twain,
And reconcilement found not where to stand;
But of no red and secret bond of blood

Heard I the bruit before the deed took fire.

Bothwell. Will you so swear? what, none?

Murray. I have said; and you
That reft your kinsman Balfour by device
Out of my hand and thwarted judgment, see
Your heart be set not now to climb too high
A stair whereon the foot that slips grows red
And stumbling once in blood falls whence nor wing
Nor hand can lift it from the pit again.

Queen. Vex not yourself lest he should fall or stand
With whom you stand or fall not.

Bothwell. My desire
Was toward no help of riddling counsellors,
But of such friends as speak with hand for tongue
And acts for parables; your wit, my lord,
Is nothing of the queen's need nor of mine.

Murray. It may be, no; but to make trial of that,
Ere I take ship for France, the ways being barred
By force and strife through Flanders to the south
And those fair towns that with her highness' leave
Shall call me guest awhile in Italy,
I am bound for London, where I fear and hope
My tongue may serve her more than here your hands
If it make fair her cause in English eyes.

Bothwell. What hath her cause to do with their bleared sight,
Or with her name their judgment? who need care
What colour we that breathe with our own lips
Wear in the mist made of their breath far off?

Murray. The ambassador that bore her last word back

Hath but made way for one at point to come
Whose message, carrying weight as in wise ears
It needs must carry, will take form and force
From present witness of his eye that reads
What mind is borne here and what work is done,
What judgment or what counsel most bears weight;
Which it imports us for this land's great sake
That the English queen misknow not nor misread
For fault or fraud of darkling evidence.

Bothwell. And you it is must give those blind eyes sight,
Shape to the shadows of that ignorance, form
To their loose judgment of us? What have we,
What hath our Scotland here or queen of Scots
To do with English tongues? can we not strike
Nor stand nor walk alone, but for our need
Must use their hands and feet, their wits and eyes,
To help us live or live not? By my life,
Which is not held in pawn yet of their leave,
I had rather be an English horse or ass
Than on these terms a Scot, to square my will
By their inscribed conditions.

Murray. At your will
Lies your own way of life; not yet this land's,
Nor theirs that living should be lords of it.
Madam, to God's care I commend your grace
Who take with careful heart my leave of you,
Lest you too much should lack the care of men.

Queen. Be not too careful for my sake; your leave
Was given ere you could take it. Sir, farewell.

Murray. Farewell, as you shall will it. [*Exit.*

Bothwell. God be with you!

Your wisdom shall not be so hot of foot
But it may be outspeeded. If it lay
Plots with the stranger, our prevention here
Must pluck the fangs out of its craft; and first
With his own hand shall Huntley draw the bond
Whereto will we set ours in pledge ere long
To make them fast by contract, I being free
To plight mine own, as by consent unbound
From hers that was my wife pretended; you,
Being by this troublous time bent and inclined
To seek some stay in wedlock and put off
The weak estate of widowhood, yet loth
For worthy reasons of grave strength to choose
Again a stranger subject, have made choice
Of me desertless for my fair deserts,
And purpose even on heel of my divorce
For their good cause to wed me; this subscribed
Shall in my keeping be laid up, and straight
Hence must we back to that loud town of yours
And take our danger by the throat; proclaim
At once my trial; if it be possible,
Before word come from England; let the post
That brings you counsel of Elizabeth's
Find the cause judged and the cry fallen again
And no link hanging of the gyves of law
Round our free feet and steadfast.

Queen. Ah, not mine,
That are fast bound and yet can stand not fast

Except my love's strength hold them up, and strike
These iron toils in sunder. If the bond
Could bind and loose indeed, knit and unknit
Hands that must part from hands that are to meet,
With force of more than writing, all my heart
Should bleed glad drops to sign and seal it. Sir,
Here was again our enemy in mine ears
Forewarning me of marriage ; the same tongue
That was before a serpent at your heel
Shot out anew to sting it ; but you know
The craft of this state horseleech, that by fraud
Takes pleasure to bear all the world in hand
That no one can be sure of him, and we
May least of all be by such lips allured
To trust and find them dangerous.

Bothwell. Nay, by God,
I mind me how he left his neighbour friends
In his faith's name to hang for hostages
Whose necks paid forfeit of his broken bond
And made his oath a halter for the Lairds
Of Lochinvar and Garlies. By my life
That this keen tongue would strike at, in my mind
It were the best work worth a good man's hand
To quit them on Lord Herries.

Queen. No, let be;
You will unpeople me this land of friends ;
Mine he must live, or lose his name, and yours
For my name's sake he shall be.

Bothwell. So might I
Find at his hands such friendship as they twain

Whose throats for him were writhen; and such a friend
Is he that stands behind our deed, and says
He never heard of manslaying, fie, not he,
Our darkling brother with close lips and clean,
The blood was no part of his bond, he says,
That his eyes winked on while his hand was dry;
He will not bear us witness nor take part
With me that have done more than blink at blood.
He will to London, but to speak for you,
That will he, being a kindly man of kind,
Whole-blooded in his love and faith to you,
God wot, no bastard in his brotherhood.
I would give God a year out of my life
That I have kinglike hope to live with you
For one sweet breath of time to strike at him
And let my sword's lip drink his body dry
And with one deep kiss drain his flesh of blood.
Who smells not by the savour of his faith
On what close nest of foul and fledgling hopes
His trust sits brooding to build up himself
By overthrowing of that crowned head which keeps
His misbegotten forehead bare of gold—
And with my hand shall keep it?

Queen. Ay, though all
That breathe on earth mine enemies at his beck
Rose by the light of his ambiguous eyes
With his sheathed hand to strike, and leave ungirt
This forfeit head with empire: but I know
A stronger hand bared for my help and stay,
This that I touch, this that I love; the star

That points my feet on pilgrimage, the staff
That stays my steps back to that troublous town
Whereof they are weary, yet would halt not now,
But tread more fleet than fire their fiery way
To that fair end where they were fain to be.
We will set forth to-morrow.

Bothwell. Ere we go,
I will take order that men's tongues be clipt
Who show too broad their conscience of remorse;
There was a knave of Balfour's in our trust
That hath by this, being found unsure of mouth,
Resigned it to the counsel-keeping worm.
If more there be that live not stingless yet,
The same dumb mouth that has nor lips nor tongue
Must open for them privily; the grave
Hath gorge enough for all such secret food,
And will not babble of the hands that feed.
For them that being in blood of our own kind
Will stand elsewhere against me than in court,
I will make present proffer of myself
To answer them in arms.

Queen. You shall not fight.

Bothwell. Not if no need be.

Queen. There shall be no need.
Not in this cause, you shall not need to fight.
We will set on the trial presently,
And after we may sleep with no blood more.

SCENE IV.—THE UPPER CHAMBER IN HOLYROOD.

The QUEEN *and* MARY BEATON

Queen. Is it not hard on ten?
Mary Beaton. At point to strike.
Queen. This forenoon will outlast the night for length.
How looks the morning?
Mary Beaton. Like the time of year;
The heaven is red and full of wind; the clouds
Are rent and routed of the striving sun
Like a lost army.
Queen. Is there no noise abroad?
Mary Beaton. The throngs grow thick in rumour; faces scowl,
Eyes burn, brows bend, and all the cry o' the crowd
Waits to break forth but till a fire-flaught fall
To make the dumb brands speak and shoot out flame
When he shall pass for whom it waits to burn.
Yet have I seen as great a throng from hence
As frets there now.
Queen. I would he had thought to-day
To ride with doubled guard. What brawl is there?
Mary Beaton. The messenger from Berwick, as I think,
That would have entrance to you, and is thrust back
By the lord Bothwell's kin that keep the gates.
Queen. What, here so soon? I will not see him till night.

I am asleep ; if there be brawls i' the court,
Call out the troopers, bid my French guard forth
To quell all rioters.

Mary Beaton. They are of your own part
That make the brawl, my lord's men and your guard
That press about the gateway.

Queen. The cry sinks ;
Is he not come, that so their noise is fallen ?

Mary Beaton. And Maitland with him ; he signs them silent, takes
From the English messenger a letter sealed,
And leaves all still.

Queen. I prayed him see me first
Before he rode to trial. All will be well,
If he have stayed their storm, and keep his heart
High as his fortune.

Enter BOTHWELL.

Is that brawl at end ?

Bothwell. Here is a letter by a hot-foot post
Brought from Sir William Drury, that his queen
Through him commends her counsel in to you
And bids you, or my thought belies it, show
All favour and furtherance to your enemy's plea,
Lennox, whose cause she finds most fair, and would not
For your own sake see slighted or put by,
Lest your fame bleed ; look if she say not so ;
Else I know nothing of her maiden mind,
Who sometime lived her prisoner.

Queen. Let that rest ;

But tell me what the spring was of this noise
That shook our hearing; would he speak perforce,
This English post, though bidden back, with me?

Bothwell. But that our fellows thrust him from the gate;
My captain of the castle, a stalwart guard,
The Laird of Skirling, that I put in charge,
Called to the guide aloud, he should be hanged
For bringing English villains through to us here,
And hands were there to reive the rope to him;
Then drew your guard together and our troops,
Whose musters line the straitened streets with steel
That holds embanked their muttering multitudes
Till I ride through; and those within the gates
Hurtled together with blind cries and thrusts,
But at my sight fell silent as a sea
Settling, that growls yet with the sunken wind,
And holds its peace with unslaked wrath; then I
Took from the pressed and labouring messenger
His letter for your hand, who were not risen
And should ere night receive him; so I said,
And thus it shall suffice you do, so be it
We bear the bell to-day in parliament,
Where I should be by this at bar, to stand
And make mine answer.

Queen. I am not sick of fear,
Yet my heart loathes its burden of this hour
And beats and drops like a bird wounded. Nay,
I do not hold you; go; 'tis but my hand
Fastens on yours; my heart would have you gone,
And here again to assure me of good speed.

Whom have we of the judges on our side,
Tell me once more, whom doubtful-coloured, whom
Our enemies certain? let me know it again,
That I may read the bede-roll of their names
Here over in my heart while you are gone
To make it sure and strong, come evil or good,
That neither find me heartless.

Bothwell. Of our part
The lord of Arbroath for the Hamiltons
Is as his father's person, Chatelherault,
And Cassilis a mainstay safe as steel;
Caithness and Herries are such friends of yours
As love me less for your sake, yet I think
Must strike to-day beside us; one man most
I would we might have razed out of the roll,
Which is the assessor, Lindsay; who shall be
As poison to us; and evil is our chance
That Morton being of kin to your dead man
Should not sit here to help, as but for this
I would perforce have bound him to our side;
But let this be; we shall bear bravely through
For all their factions and fierce policies
As knives ensheathed against us, or being foiled
Find surer issue than they wot of. So,
With such good hope as grows of a good heart,
Give me God-speed.

Queen. God speed you as I pray
You may speed ever; all my prayer is spent,
I can no more of wishing; what I would,
That must you will, having my heart in you,

That beats but with your blood, thrills with your sense,
Thinks with your thought, desires with your desire,
And lives upon your living. Where you go
You bear me with you; where your face is set
Mine eye takes outlook, and where falls your foot
I tread beside you silent. O, this day
Shall be to us as the crown o' the wave that turns
And bears inshore the lading of our lives
With all the might of its great heart that breaks
And brings us into harbour; we shall stand
High on the beach where it was spent, and praise
The faithful hour that served us; yea, even this
Shall be a dear one to us, held fast at heart
When all the pain and doubt of it is dead,
And lovingly remembered; you shall look
From your high place beside your humble love
With kingly eye on this dead day, and think
How she that set her crown about your head
And put her own beneath your foot, as now
Bade you fare forth, and kissed you.

Bothwell. I am returned,
Ere I pass forth, already in my heart,
With my cause crowned; I cannot doubt of speed
Who have your face before mine eyes as fire
And keep your words' heat in mine ear to burn
If I should shrink, and sting my spirit alive
For love's and shame's sake. When we meet at night,
A king's kiss will I set upon these lips
That seal me royal ere I part. Farewell. [*Exit.*

Queen. I would mine eye were in my heart to go

With that beside him ; but the heart it is
Sits now in the eye and follows where it may,
But a street's length ; then part they, and the sight
Turns back, but not the thought; such wings it hath
As the sight hath not, and is subtler nerved
Than the swift spirit of the eye. O my life's light,
This is not I that looks forth after you
To feed her eyesight, but who leaves you not,
Who rides beside you, breathes out of your lips,
Looks through your eyes and triumphs in your heart,
That unseen and inseparate thing is I.
Look, he is up ; how royally he rides,
As no king else on earth ! and waves to me
As who should say, Be glad ; and glad I am,
Who have the lordliest lover in the world
And the most heart to love him. Ay, that steed
Should be the higher of heart that feels him stride
And moves the merrier-mettled; by none such
Was it before bestridden.

Mary Beaton. Was not this
Lord Darnley's horse?

Queen. Ay, when Lord Darnley was.

Mary Beaton. The horse he loved of all the rest
and fed
Ere he bestrode it ever?

Queen. Like enough ;
What ails it yet to have eaten of his hand?
It bears not now the worse a better man.

Mary Beaton. Nay, so it seems : it bounds not as
in wrath,

For aught I see, beneath him, but heaves up
A sidelong head toward his new hand, and turns
The light back on him of a joyful eye.
So is it with only beasts that are beloved;
They have not hearts like ours.

Queen. What need they have?
I would have nothing love him as I love,
And had it heart it would; yet I do think
All beasts and men are mad that love him not
As I should surely were I beast or man.
He can no longer see my handkerchief;
Let us go in: I will not sit and wait
With the street's hustling faces in my sight. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE IN THE TOLBOOTH.

BOTHWELL, *with* ORMISTON *and others attending, at the bar;* ARGYLE *presiding as Lord Justice;* LINDSAY *as assessor;* CAITHNESS, CASSILIS, ROTHES, ARBROATH, MAXWELL, HERRIES, *and others, as jury;* ROBERT CUNNINGHAM *as spokesman for Lennox.*

Ormiston (*aside to Bothwell*). Fie, look not down
so at your feet, my lord;
What devil is this that irks you? in your face
A fool might read you what you are; why, so
Might a man look that were now going to death.
Hold up your face for God's sake and look blithe;
Alas and aye woe worth them that devised
The thing that shall make all us mourn, I trow,
For you that now look sadly.

Bothwell. Hold your peace;
I would not yet it were to do; I have
An outgate any way whereby to pass,
As ye shall know, and soon. Trouble me not.

Argyle. My lords, ye have heard how to the indictment read
The accused who stands at his own instance here
Returns his plea of guiltless; and thereon
The accuser next invoked to approve his charge,
Nor answering nor appearing, leaves no cause
For us to judge; but here in his default
Is risen his servant to sustain his part
And unawares among us unrequired
Take up this charge here fallen, or stretch at least
Some form across of pretext wide enough
To cover with excuse this lack of charge,
Which else might seem with emptiness of cause
To mock your judgments; wherefore, if ye will,
He stands to plead before us.

Caithness. We are content.

Robert Cunningham. My lords, I am here but in my master's name,
The earl of Lennox, to declare what cause
This day constrains his absence; which in brief
Is first the brief time given for so great work,
Next that he stands now naked of his friends
And fellowship of servants to maintain
His honour with the surety of his life;
And having help of no friend but himself,
He hath laid on me commandment to desire

A day sufficient for that weight of cause
Which he shall have to keep it; and if hence
Your lordships at this present shall proceed,
Here I protest that if the assize to-day,
By their twelve persons that upon this charge
Shall enter now on panel, speak him clear
Who stands accused for murder of the king,
It shall be wilful error in men's eyes
And not abuse of ignorance, by this cause
That all men know him for murderer; and hereto
Upon this protestation I require
Of your high court a document to stand
And set my lord's right here on register
And those men's wrong who put it by to-day.

Argyle. This is some reason if the ground be good
Whereon his protest is built up, to excuse
Default of witness by defect of time;
But here that ground is shaken, that we find,
By letters of his own writ to the queen,
My lord of Lennox earnest to bring on
With forward expedition as of fire
This cause for trial, and by all pleas intent
To enforce this court make haste, and being convoked
Despatch with breathless justice and short stay
The work wherein he seems to accuse us now
For too much heat to move too fast, and mar
The perfect end of trial with force of speed,
Preventing him of witness. Wherefore then
Was his own will so keen, his plaint so loud,
So strong his protestation, to procure

The speed too late reproached, too soon required?
Here are we met for judgment, whom himself
Bade the queen summon, with insistent heat
And sharp solicitation urged of wrong,
Nay, with the stroke of an imperative tongue,
As though to impel some loth or laggard heart,
And found instead a free and forward will
In her to meet his own; here sits the court,
There stands the man of him or his impeached
To give them loyal answer; where sits he?
Where speaks his proof? where stand his witnesses?
What sentence of what judges shall be given
Where none stands forth to accuse? Here are but words,
Surmises, light and loud and loose, that blow
In the air of nameless lips and babblers' breath
From ear to ear about the wide-mouthed world;
These are not for our judgment.

Caithness. We sit here
To find if there be proof or likelihood
More than of common tongues that mark a man
Guilty, and know not why this man or that,
But some name they must have to feed upon;
And in my mind, where witness there is none
Nor prosecution of a personal cause,
Even should we err to find the accused man free,
It were no wilful error, nor this court
In any just man's sight accountable
As for unrighteous judgment, being cut off
From evidence that it was met to hear;

Which we reject not, but require indeed,
Yet can by no solicitous mean procure.
Moreover, sirs, one flaw there is to note
More evident than these proofs invisible
Even in the letter of the charge, which bears,
Ye see, the ninth day's date of February,
When all we know that on the tenth it was
This violence, by what hand soe'er, was done:
So that I see not, for my simple part,
How any man, for that which no man did,
Should stand condemned; for at this date assigned
Was no such deed as this done in the world.

Maxwell. Why, let the charge be drawn again, and straight;
The court is mocked in this.

Caithness. How mocked, my lord?
It is necessity of law, to keep
Pure hands by perfect heed of flawless words;
And that you stood the dead man's friend alive
Gives you not right nor reason to rise up
And tax the reason or the right of law.

Maxwell. Right! where is right in all this circumstance,
Or aught but wrong and broken judgment? where
Justice or shame or loyalty, to try
The truth whereon red fraud and violence tread
And smother up the tongueless cry of blood?
Are we not here to judge of murder done,
And either from an innocent brow take off
The spot of its suspicion, or convince

The branded forehead of bloodguiltiness?
Is there no counsel on the part accused
Nor answer of defensive argument
But of close-lipped evasion? and the court
In this forsooth is mocked not! We shall stand
The shameful signs of laughter to the world
And loathing to men loyal, if this pass
With no more trial but mockery, and the land
Sit silent and attaint of innocent blood
Before the face of all men that expect
For our own sake what justice we shall show
Or be defamed for ever.

Arbroath. Sirs, meseems
Where no charge is that no response can be,
Where none impeaches, none can stand accused:
And of what mouth what challenge is put forth,
And on what witness what impeachment hangs,
To implead of guilt the man we sit to try?
Herein I say it is the court is mocked,
Even all of us, and all the baffled land,
And most this noble man that unaccused
Stands at our bar and finds not to confront
One witness, nor one enemy to beat back,
But only as 'twere a wind that sounds, a breath
That shifts and falters in the face of proof,
A blast that envy blows and fear breaks off,
Disabled of its nature, by itself
Frustrate and maimed of its own evil will.

Lindsay. Who talks of envious or of fearful heart?
We hear the general judgment of the land

Cry out for trial, and from foreign tongues
Reproach cast on us that we cast off heed;
What should we do for shame if in this cause,
For doubt of one man's friends or of what power
Might stand behind to buckler him at need,
We durst not move, nor, though the world looked on,
Show but a face of justice?

Cassilis. Must we set
Our judgments by the common tongue that strikes
And knows not what the hour is? or become
Thralls to the praise and bondmen to the blame
Of men by no tie blood-bound to our love,
To make our lives look in their foreign sight
Fair, lest they speak us evil? By my head,
No Scot I hold him, but a strange man's knave,
Whose spirit is shrunk or swollen by their breaths.

Argyle. Well, let the votes be given, and each man's doom
Affirm if in his true and equal mind
The charge be proven upon my lord or no.
How go the voices?

Lindsay. By one half their dooms
The lords here of the jury speak him free
With clear acquittal of bloodguiltiness;
One half is voiceless.

Argyle. He then is proclaimed
Of this high court not guilty, and the charge
On trial stands not good against him. Sir,
The court upon this plea declares for you
You are found free of blood.

Bothwell. My noble lords,
Being proved thus in your judgments clear of crime,
Here on this door will I to-day set up
My personal challenge in mine honour's right
To meet in arms, before what judge he will,
What gentleman soever undefamed
Shall take upon him to confront my cause.
For their lewd mouths who threat and wear no sword,
Your judgment given to acquit me shall abash
The malice it puts power into mine arm
With might of right to baffle. Sirs, good day.

[*Exit with* ORMISTON *and his followers.*

Argyle. Break up the court; the cause is judged.

Maxwell (*to* LINDSAY). Is judged?
I know not of such seed what stem will spring,
But that fruit sour as gall and red as blood
For men's false mouths must of this judgment grow
I would I saw less surely than I see.

SCENE VI.—THE HIGH STREET.

BURGESSES *and* PEOPLE.

First Citizen. What more of shame is laid up for us? when
Will heaven put forth a hand to touch with fire
These naked sins and shrivel? Have you heard
What last lies bare for judgment?

Second Citizen. Why, the last
Is not this half-hour's shame; each stroke each day

Strikes out a fresh one, that five minutes old
Dies of the next forgotten. Yesterday
Some talk was of the challenge yet, which now
No man casts thought on, though by two good swords
Was battle proffered: by the stout laird first
Of Tullibardine, in that brother's name
Whom they for fear have taxed of treason, so
To eschew his proof and peril; he defies
The challenger to combat, and requires
England and France for judges of the field
In person of their sovereigns; this refused,
On such new plea as craven craft may find,
With his queen's leave the ambassador himself
Of England gladly with his own heart's will
Would take the personal cause upon him.

First Citizen. What!
Is it for fault of Scots to match and mate
The pride in Bothwell swoln with innocent blood
None but Sir William Drury may be held
Worth his sword's wrath that walks by night?

Third Citizen. Perchance
As for his queen he stands here deputy,
And for our own her champion opposite
Afield with swords' play or abed with lips',
They hold the match more equal.

Fourth Citizen. Nay, this news
Is grey of beard already; hear you not
How by this priestly parliament of ours,
That to beguile us and for no goodwill
Hath in the queen's name passed its act to affirm

God's present gospel stablished in this realm,
The murderer lives now twice absolved of blood
And has by voice of prelates and of earls
The assize allowed for good that purged him first,
And shall be loosened of his marriage bond
That twelve months since was tied? his brother-in-law
Shall have again his forfeit lands, and see
His sister from her married bed thrust out,
And stir no finger; then without more stay
Who sees not where the adulterer's foot shall climb
And by what head his own be pillowed? nay,
These papers hung against our walls by night
Are tongues that prophesy but truth; ye saw
That likeness of a hare enringed with swords
And of a mermaid crowned with burning eyes
Who drove the hounds off with a two-thonged scourge
That coursed him trembling; and her hand indeed
Is found not slow to smite; a law now lives
Denouncing on his head no less than death
Who shall set up, or seeing shall pluck not down,
Such placards writ: the first soe'er who finds
And leaves the writing that defames her friend
To pass among the people, at her will
Shall lie in bonds; but if this brand herself,
Then must the man that spared it or that set
Die; so the fire-eyed queen of shipwreck sings
Death in their ears who sail this dangerous sea
Whereon the ship reels of our staggering state,
And with the flame shot from her eyes puts out
The light of theirs that were as lightnings turned

On her hare-hearted lover.

Third Citizen. Yet they lack
The power with boast or menace to seal up
The lips of poor men; but three days ago
As she rode through the Grassmarket I heard
How from their stalls the women cried on her,
God save your grace! but with this added word
That smote the smile upon her lips to death,
If ye be spotless of the dead king's blood.

Second Citizen. Such words and souls mount nigher
God's ear and eye
Than theirs who lent this man their hands to slay
And tongues to purge him of their general sin,
He of St. Andrew's and his under priest,
Bishop of Ross, Leslies and Hamiltons
Whose lips are bloody, and that double soul
Argyle, that steers their faction; and this crew
Masked here as mouthpiece of the loathing land
Must hide the people's heart and true men's truth
With craft of prattling prelates; yet such mouths
As are unlocked and locked again with gold
But gape till God shall pluck their tongues out.

Fifth Citizen. Yea,
Ye hear but this, and have to burn your ears
No hotter news of these men, or what bond
Bears written broad and brave such names as these
Of earls and bishops? this is strange yet, sirs,
That fires my cheek to tell you?

Second Citizen. Why, men said
There was a knot that met of these to sup

Shut in with Bothwell's hackbutters for guard
That drew round Ainslie's Tavern where they sat
Like a strait hoop of steel to bind them safe
And hold them fast from starting; and some bond
Of these his guests at Bothwell's prayer subscribed
There was that bound them to him, against all foes
That might impeach him of the crime discharged
By the open court's acquittal, from this day
To take his part upon them and stand fast
As to their own cause, being made subject all
To slander and suspicion that but grows
Of honour and high credit held with kings:
So much we heard, and found not strange.

Fifth Citizen. Nay, this
Was but the grace that served their banquet in
Of meats as strong as poison; there ensued
A pledge more mortal of a bond more base;
Considering this time present, how the queen
Stood husbandless, and how the general weal
Might let her not long live so, should her mind
By thought of his true services be moved
To take the earl Bothwell to her loving lord,
They and each man there met of them should plight
His honour, truth, and heart's fidelity
To advance this marriage with all furtherance given
Of counsel, satisfaction, and good help
As soon as law might give it leave to be,
And as their common enemy should esteem
What man soever of evil will to them
Might seek its hindrance; and to this were set

More than those names ye spake of; be it for fear,
For craft or vantage, none of these fell off
Save Eglinton that slipped for shame away,
And Morton with the secretary, that gave
Their voice yet for this marriage, but would seal
No general bond of service on his side:
Save these, no priest or peer of them but lives
His servant pledged; their hands, tongues, counsels, hearts,
His or not theirs, and all they mansworn men.

Third Citizen. I have assurance of a true man's faith
That word was writ of this confederacy
To the English council from the Laird of Grange,
Desiring knowledge with what ear their queen
Shall take these tidings; and albeit of late
In all our trouble being found slow to help
She hath lost the love here borne her, if her grace
For this late murder will pursue revenge,
She shall win all the hearts of all the best
Again, he says, in Scotland; who should be,
With her good help and favour, swift to take
This vengeance on them, and redeem from fear
Their prince's life now trembling in the reach
Of hands that slew his father; for our queen
Hath sworn she cares not for her lover's sake
To lose France, England, and her natural land,
And would go with him to the wild world's end
Stript to her smock ere leave him.

Second Citizen. Has he writ

So much to the English court of her? being ours,
He should let shame keep silence of her shame.

First Citizen. What shame or silence can shut up for shame
That which at noon walks clamorous of itself
And boastful to be naked? They will wed,
Though thunder sound forth sin, and while God speaks
Will kiss in sight of lightning.

Fourth Citizen. Was there not
Some noise of strife arisen for fault of pay
Among their crew of Bothwell's villains here
That hold by force of hand the palace gates?

Second Citizen. Such rumour was, for certain; and himself
Strode in among the middle mutiny
Like a thieves' captain, and being braved of them
Caught by the throat one that was lord o' the brawl
And would have slain but for the throng that cried
And drove upon him shouting, till for fear
He was even fain to stop with promises
Their mouths who clamoured; which to see fulfilled
Needs must he sit no lower than doth a king.

Third Citizen. So then the gates are open, and the queen
By leave of these her guards and him their chief
May part in peace for Stirling now to see
Her son in ward there of the castellan?
Where we, God knows, may give him thanks that one
So wise as the earl of Mar and stout of heart
Hath our born king in covert, who might sleep

On that sweet breast that bore him not so safe
As in a hand so honest.

First Citizen. Ay, God help,
There is no surety in such housekeeping
As thunder comes forth of the sky by night
To fall upon and burn it, yet no storm
Save of men's making seen, nor fire in heaven
Save what rose up from under. Verily,
Our good lord Bothwell spake but truth who said
To good James Melville how so strange a thing
On earth was never known of: pity 'tis
He could not come to look upon the corpse
Though Bothwell bade him, seeing it was removed;
It was his hapless chance to find it gone
And in safe keeping of some secret hand
That waited on it living; such things are:
The worse hap his. They say it had no wound;
So if by some mischance, as God forbid,
The prince were reft unluckily of life,
I think he should have none for eye to see
That might read evil.

Third Citizen. Who shall ride with her?

Second Citizen. Why, no great train, lest being within the walls
She take the child into her hand and give
For better care to Bothwell's, with the keys
That keep this castle too; but yet I think
His hand nor hers shall put God's judgment back
That waits to take them triumphing, and turn
To tears their laughter and our grief to joy.

SCENE VII.—STIRLING CASTLE.

The QUEEN *and* HUNTLEY.

Queen. Will you go back from us?
Huntley. I like it not;
I do not see how this may be made good.
Queen. There is no flaw but in your fainter heart;
The way is fair and even; I cannot think
What seed is in men's hearts that brings forth fear
Out of all season. Why are you so sad?
The thing is no more dangerous than it was
When our first plot was laid; nay, so much less
By how much these are ours whose names and bonds
Speak on our side inscribed.
Huntley. Madam, not so;
The earl of Sutherland, whose forfeiture
Your grace but now remitted with mine own,
When we shall meet my brother's men in arms,
Will die before he yield you to their hands.
Queen. My lord, you have no brother of him now
That was your sister's husband. I will write
To bid him bring up men enough to outmatch
All that ride with us homeward, and so far
That none the hardiest shall but think on fight.
Three hundred hath your earl? then in his rank
There shall be more than of our company,
That I to spare men's blood may yield myself.
Huntley. It is too gross and foolishly devised;
When I spake last with him, he laid on you

The charge to say where we should meet and when,
And what should by contrivance plead for me,
To save my name though you be yielded up
Who ride with me for escort ; all this charge
He lays on you, and bids me write again
What you shall say by letter ; of himself
He moves not yet ; and I beseech you think,
Before you move him, in what enterprise
You put to pledge your honour, that can never
With honour wed him who being wedded man
By force and violent hand hath borne you off ;
Nor will my folk endure it, I wot well,
But it must come to trial by hap of fight
With doubt and accident of answering arms ;
Where if we fail on our part, then on his
Shall be the blame and bloody note of war
Made on your personal guard ; but if we win
That ride with you as followers, then is he
The most forlorn of men revolted ; else,
I shall be called of all that sin on earth
The most unthankful traitor, who being now
But newly of your grace remade your man
Shall yield you up by treason without blows
Into a rebel's handling ; and the lords,
I doubt, when they shall see you in his hold,
Will think not much to unswear their oaths, deny
Their words and hands as given through force or fear,
And signed not of their hearts ; I pray, think of it,
And take some other counsel to your mind.

Queen. My lord, if you bear back my word to him,

It shall be this: that seeing I am come so far,
If of his own will he withdraw him not,
For no persuasion nor for death itself
Will I be brought to break my faith with him.
For this you say of them that follow you
And of your fear to bear a thankless name
For my supposed betraying, you should by now
With him have taken counsel of the chance,
And not have thrown it here across my way
Who have no choice to pass not over it,
Seeing I may turn not back for life or death,
For fear or shame or love of any man.
As for the place, he doth not well to cast
On me too even the election; let him choose,
And send me word, with pardon that herein
I tax my lord of too much negligence.
For those your followers whom you most misdoubt,
You shall be wise to weed our train of them
If any wise mean be to draw them forth.
This is my counsel, of a simple wit
And womanish, but not so vile at heart
As to go back for danger from its faith.
I pray you so report of me, and say,
When he shall ask you of my mind again,
No more but this word only; and farewell.

[*Exit* HUNTLEY.

This faint-heart honesty with half a hand
Is falser found at need than falsehood's self,
And ever was of me more hated. O,
That I might take these hours as in my hand

And men that yet divide us, with one grasp
To gripe them dead and pluck his fang from time
That waits to fasten on us unawares
And make love mortal with the kiss that kills!
A day and night are as a long life's length
That part the hungering from the perfect hour,
The void from the fulfilling.—Nay, come in.

Enter MARY BEATON *and* PARIS.

Mary Beaton. Here waits my lord of Bothwell's messenger
To bear your word back of Lord Huntley's mind.

Queen. Ay, that I found it trustless. Tell my lord
He makes me mad to put his faith in him
And to mistrust that which is wholly his,
Even her true heart to whom he should have sent
Word every day what she should do for him,
And hath done nothing of it. I did say
He should take heed of that false brother-in-law,
Of whom his negligence and heedless faith
Have put us in the danger; on my part
There has lacked nothing toward the work in hand,
And had he not more changed his mind than I
Since I went from him, he should need not now
By stranger's lips inquire of my resolve.
Say how you see me, and till he send me word
That I will here lie sick, as God he knows
What health I have at heart; would I were dead,
For all I see goes ill; but tell your lord
This was not in his promise that I find,

Nor no such matter; but he lets me see
What power has absence on him, to whose bow
His hand has yet another string than mine.
And look you warn him of this brother-in-law
That he hath babbled of our enterprise
Wherein he puts but forth a heartless hand,
And in what great men's ears he well may guess
Who knows which most are dangerous; yet methinks
If still we have need to flatter them, so much
Might naturally be pleaded on his part,
That his good service and long amity
Might well deserve his pardon and their love
If past a subject's duty he put forth,
Not to constrain me but assure himself
Of such place nigh me that no foreign tongue
May by strange counsel hinder my consent
To that whereto he trusts his service shall
Make him one day to attain; with such excuse
Shall he persuade them that he stands compelled
To make pursuit against his enemies:
And he may find fair words at will to say
To Maitland most of all, through whose keen tongue
We hold the rest by the ear; but if at last
The deed of our device mislike him now,
Let him send word and leave not on my head
The blame of all; and if it like him yet,
Say I beseech him for the honour of God
To come with no less force accompanied
Than of three hundred men; rather with more,
For that is all the main part of my care;

Seeing as for Huntley, I assure myself
He in our play shall henceforth bear no part
But of an honest and a fearful man
Whose thought and all his toil of heart it is
To keep the load of treason from his name.
Therefore I would not have my lord in all
Trust or mistrust him, but be circumspect
And take more power unto him.

Paris. So shall I say;
Your highness hath no message more for me?

Queen. God wot no time it is for us to change
Tokens and toys of love; yet I would send
For very sorrow something but in sign
That of my heart's grief I accuse not him
For his cold writing or forgetfulness,
His little memory of me and little care,
And least of all his promise-breach, being now
So far made his that what thing pleases him
Is acceptable to me, and all my thoughts
To his so willingly subdued, that all
That comes of him proceeds of no such root,
In mine esteem, as loveless negligence
Nor any love's lack, but such only cause
As I desire, being just and reasonable,
Which is the final order he should take
For his own surety and honour, who alone
Is my life's stay for which I only will
Preserve it, and without which in this world
My soul desires not but a sudden death.
Bear therefore to him for testimony of me

How lowly I submit me to his law
In sign of homage this that I take off
Of my head's ornament, which is the chief
And guide of other members, as to say
How being possessed of that as of a spoil
Which is the principal he needs must have
The remnant subject to him with heart's consent.
And for that heart, that seeing I have left it him
Long since I have not now in hand to give,
This stone instead I send him, painted black
And sown with tears and bones, a sepulchre
Whereto my heart is likened, being as it
Carved like a tomb or certain receptacle
To harbour his commandments in, and hold
More fast than all his memory and his name
Therein enclosed as in the ring my hair,
To come forth never till the grant of death
Shall let him rear a trophy of my bones,
As is the ring full of them, set therein
For sign he has made full conquest of my heart,
That even the bones must be to him bequeathed
For memory of his victory and my loss
That was so sweet to me : tell him but this,
And say that by the enamelling of black
He shall discern her steadfastness who sends,
And by the tears my fears innumerable
Lest I displease him, and those tears I shed
For his dear absence and for heart's disdain
That I may not in outward shape be his
As with full strength and heart and spirit I am,

And with good cause ; for were my merit more
Than hers of all born ever for men's love
Found worthiest and most perfect, and as much
As I desire it might be in his eye,
Well might I so rest ever, and shall strive
Still to maintain me in his government
As worthily as I may. Say, I beseech him
That is mine only good, in as good part
To take it at my hand as I at his
With extreme joy received our marriage bond,
That till the marriage of our bodies be
Made publicly shall part not from my breast,
Which keeps it now in sign of all the bliss
I can or hope for or desire on earth :
And that my letter here brake off for dread
Lest this as much should weary him to read
As I took joy to write it ; therefore, say,
Here did I set a kiss as on his hand
With such devotion as I pray to God
To give him long and blessed life, and me
That only good of all which I desire
And only may pretend to in the world,
His love and his good favour who doth hold
Alone my life up ; and this trust I showed
To you in whom I know the trust he hath
As I shall for his sake whose wife I am,
His humble and obedient lawful wife,
To whom my heart and body are dedicate
And shall in no wise unto death be changed
Nor good nor evil make me go from it.

So tell him, and despatch. [*Exit* PARIS.
What said Lord Mar
Touching the child's charge to you?
Mary Beaton. But thus much;
That he would never let it from his hand
Save with assent of the three several states,
And on condition there shall be proclaimed
Some honest lord and worthy such a charge
As captain of the castle of Edinburgh,
Where only may the prince, he says, lie safe
From them that slew his father.
Queen. Ay, so brave?
There speaks a man of trust, found honourable;
I had as lief be dead as see such men
Stand so at point to thwart me: by my life,
I hold it not a straw's worth in the scale
If I must live so shackled. What, and now,
When my life trembles on the top of fate,
And all my days hang from this edge of time
'Twixt night and light suspended, whence one hour
May hurl all hopes down breathless to the pit
And cast me broken at the mountain's foot
Or set me sure and steadfast in the sun,
To be so crossed of cozening honesties,
And honours made of craft, and fraudulent faith,
Would spur a blood more sluggish than my sleep
And prick a drowsier passion. Well, let be;
Our time will come to take all these in hand.
What may doubt deem then I would do with him
That am his mother? Nay, I know their thought;

It is their fear and hatred of my lord
That glares askant on me; and the child's self,
I think, as little loves me as he need,
Knowing in what love I held his father. Come,
I will yet see, before I take my leave,
If there be such a nature in our blood
As can command and change the spiritual springs
And motions of our thought, advance or check
The pulse of purpose in the soul that moves
Our longings and our loathings to their end
By mere control and force unreasonable
Of motiveless compulsion; if such blind
And sensual chances of the stirring veins
That feed the heart of child or mother may
Divert and dull the mind's design, or turn
The conscience and the current of the will
From its full course and action. I believe,
Albeit I would not hurt the life I bare
Nor shed its blood, it is not possible
Such love should live between my child and me
Who know what source he came of more than mine,
And how that part of me once mixed therewith
Was sullied thence and shamed in mine own sight,
That loathes to look upon it, yet must see
In flesh and blood the record writ and sealed
As oft as I behold him: and you saw
He would not lie within mine arm, nor kiss,
But like a fox-cub scratched and strove, to be
Free of my hands again.

Mary Beaton. I see no need

In heaven or earth why you should love him.

Queen. No?

They say such law there is to enforce such love
On either part; I know not: but I think
Love should but flower from seed of love, and this
Was but a tare sown timeless and in hate;
Yet so much am I mother in my mind
That, be it for love or loathing, from my heart,
When I perforce commend him to that care
Which will not yield him naturally to mine,
Fain would I parting know if soon or late
Mine eyes shall turn upon that face again
Which out of me was moulded, and take note,
When each on each looks equal-eyed, and sees
His crown a shadow that makes mine a shade,
What king must this be and what queen shall I.

SCENE VIII.—DUNBAR. A ROOM IN THE CASTLE.

MAITLAND *and* SIR JAMES MELVILLE.

Melville. What, have you seen them since we came from horse?
How looks she now?

Maitland. Disquieted and strange;
And he so hot and high of mood, I think
We have no safeguard from him but in her;
And Huntley that at Stirling spake with me
Of this their counsel, and must now suspect
It was by me discovered to the lords,

Will turn perforce his fear of Bothwell's wrath
Into a sword to strike as straight as he
Even at my life, it may be; which her grace
Shall easilier from fear of them redeem
Than her own fame from evidence of men,
That seeing her prisoner see too if she came
By force or no, and led by heart or hand,
To bonds indeed or freedom.

Melville. Nay, myself
Was warned of him that rode in charge of me,
The Laird here of Blackadder, how his lord
Was of our lady's counsel; and but now
As they rode in I heard him swear, and laugh,
Who would soe'er or would not, in their spite,
Yea, though herself she would not with her will,
Yet should the queen perforce now wed with him.

Maitland. The deed has flushed his brain and blood like wine;
He is wroth and merry at once, as a man mad.
There will no good come of it.

Melville. Surely, sir,
Of such loose crafts there cannot: all this land
Will cry more loud upon her than on him
If she be known consenting.

Maitland. If she be!
How shall not all ears know it on earth that hear?
But two miles out of Edinburgh at noon,
Accompanied of all her guard and us,
She, meeting in mid road at Almond Bridge
The unthought-on Bothwell at his horsetroop's head,

Who with twelve men lays hand upon her rein,
Yields herself to him for fear our blood be spilt,
Or theirs or ours, for tenderness of heart
Submits her to his violent masterdom,
Forbids our swords, ties up all hands with words,
And doglike follows hither at his hand
For pure surprise and suddenness of fear
That plucks the heart out of resistance; then,
Riding beneath the south wall of the town,
On show of summons to the castle sent
For help of us enforced thus of our foes,
We get but fire of guns charged full of sound
With hay stuffed in for powder; and God knows
Balfour knew naught of this, the governor,
Who was forewarned not first of their design,
How by no means to cross but further it
With forecast of his office; nay, all this
Was undevised and on the sudden wrought
To take her by swift stroke of simple hand;
And so astonied were we all, and so
The castellan, and most of all the queen.
Why, though the world be drunk with faith in lies,
Shall God make this too gospel? From this day
Shall she begin her ruin; with rent heart
I see the ways wherethrough her life shall lie,
And to what end; for never henceforth more
Shall she get good or comfort of men's love,
Nor power nor honour that a queen should have,
Nor hap nor hope renewed in all her days.
She has killed herself to take her kingdom off
And give into strange keeping.

Enter the QUEEN, BOTHWELL, *and* HUNTLEY.

Bothwell. Here he stands;
This was the knave that was to baffle me;
He shall die here.

Huntley. I will not lose the part
My sword should have in him: this hour and hand
Shall cut off craft and danger. Stand, and die.

Maitland. Is it the queen's will that pursues my life?
Then let it strike, and end.

Queen. I charge you, hold;
I will not foully twice be forced of men
To stand and stain mine eyes with sight of blood
Shed of a friend, and guiltless. Hold, I say.

Bothwell. Stand by, for I will slay him.

Queen. Slay me then,
For I will fling my body on their points
Before your swords shall find him; hark you, sir,
[*To Huntley.*
Whose father died my traitor in my sight,
If one hair perish of my servant's head,
You that had back your lands and goods but now
Again shall lose them with your forfeit life
For boot of this man's blood.

Bothwell. Woman, give way.

Queen. Give all your swords way toward me; let me bleed
Ere this my friend that has been true to me:
I swear he shall not.

Maitland. Madam, for God's love,
Come you not in their peril; I am armed,
If both not run upon me.
Bothwell. Fool, I say,
Give place, or I shall know not what I do;
Make me not mad.
Queen. I cannot fear you yet.
Will you strike now?
Bothwell. I should but do you right.
Why thrust you in between me and this man
Whom your heart knows for traitor, and whose tongue
Crossed and betrayed our counsel to the lords?
Had he his will, we should not stand to-day
Here heart to heart, but you in ward of them,
And I divided from you.
Queen. My sweet lord,
Let not your wrath confound my happiness;
Stain not my fair and fortunate hour with blood
Shed of a good man who shall serve us yet.
It shall more help to have him live our friend
Than fiftyfold slain of our enemies.
Bothwell. Have your will's way: he cannot cross us now;
I care not if he live.
Maitland. I am bounden to you
For so much grace.
Queen. Vex not his mood again.
To-morrow shall all friends be reconciled;
To-night rest here in surety.
Bothwell. Be it so. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IX.—THE SAME.

The QUEEN, BOTHWELL, *and the* ARCHBISHOP *of* ST. ANDREW'S.

Queen. What counsel, father? if their league be made
So soon and strong at Stirling, we had need
Surely by this be fast in Edinburgh;
We have sent thither freely as our friends
Lord Huntley and James Melville, who were here
As in our ward, not prisoners; every day
Here lingering makes our enemies bitterer-tongued
And our strange state more hazardous; myself
More taxed for willing bondage, or my lord
For violence done upon me.

Archbishop. In my mind,
There is no mean of policy now but speed
Nor surety but short counsel and stout heart.
The lords at Stirling, while you put off time,
Athol and Mar, and Morton with Argyle,
Are sworn to crown the prince, and of his name
Make to their cause a standard, if you cleave
Still to my lord here, from whose violent hand
With your own leave they fain would pluck you forth
And keep your honour hurtless; but they see
You will have no deliverance at their hands
From him who, as they say, doth boast himself.
If he may get your child once in his ward,
To warrant him for ever in good time

From all revenging of his father's death.
Nay, it is bruited of them all about
How you at parting would have given the boy
An apple poisoned, which he put away,
And dogs that ate it after swelled and died.

Bothwell. The devil is in their lips; had I free way,
Fire should seal up and sear them.

Archbishop. So they talk;
The very children's tongues are hot on you,
And in their plays your shadowy action staged
And phantoms raised of your presented deed;
Boys that in Stirling's streets had made their game
To act again the slaying of Darnley, so
Were rapt with passion of the pastime feigned
They wellnigh slew the player that took on him
Your part, my lord, as murderer, and came off
Half hanged indeed and breathless; this I hear,
And more much weightier daily from that part
Pointing the same way on you; sure it is,
From France and England messengers desire
To have the prince delivered to their charge
As to be fostered for his surety's sake
Of one or other, safelier so bestowed
In foreign harbourage of a stranger court
Than at the rough breast of his natural land;
Such offer comes there of Elizabeth
To those unquiet lords, but other aid
They must of her not look for to their part
Who stand against their sovereign. Now, since these
Are dangers evident, and every day

Puts more in them of dangerous, best it were,
I think, to meet them warlike point to point,
Your hands and powers made one, and multiplied
By mutual force and faith; or you must part
And each lose other, and yet be neither saved,
Or presently with one sole face confront
The many-mouthed new menace of the time,
With divers heads deformed of enmities
That roar and ravin in the night of state
Made dim with factions; only majesty
With light of bared and kindled brows and eyes
Can face them to consume; do you but show
Your soul as high as is your crown, and power
As plain as is your cause, you shall enforce
By resolution and a forthright will
The obedience and the allowance of these men
That would constrain you by the fear of them
Within the limit of their leave. I say,
Proclaim at once the fore-ordained divorce
Between his sometime lady and my lord
And hard thereon your marriage, as compelled
By perilous instance of necessity
At once to assure you of a husband's help
And present strength in this your need, who stand
Fenceless and forceless with no man for stay,
And could desire none truer and worthier trust
Than him whose service done and valiant name
May warrant your remission of such fault
As men lay on him for the seeming force
With which unwillingly he stood constrained

To save you even for love's sake from their hands
Whence had not he redeemed you as by might
They had done you worse wrong than he seemed to do.
This shall excuse the speed that you put on
And leave their hands no time to rise that would
Prevent you, being unmarried; and your own,
Forestalling them, shall take again and steer
The helm of this land's general weal, else left
To their cross guidance and false pilotage.

Bothwell. By God, well said and counselled.

Queen. All is well,
Or shall, if but one thing be; and in you
That lies alone of all men. Nay, you know it;
Wrong me not now to ask.

Bothwell. Wrong you not me,
To cross my wit with riddles, which you know
From no man's lips I love.

Queen. I know not yet
If there be nought on any lips that live
Save mine that you love better: I can tell
Too little of your likings.

Bothwell. Be not wroth
That thus much of them I desire you learn,
And set your heart to it, once being schooled—fair queen,
These are no chambering times, nor sit we here
To sing love's catches counter-changed with words
That cross and break in kisses: what you will,
Be swift to speak, or silent.

Queen. What I will?

I will be sure there hangs about your heart
No thought that bound it once to one cut off
And yet may feed it with desire to share
What is my treasure and my right to have
With her most undeserving; which in you
Were more than Jason's falsehood was, that gave
To his new wife such vantage of his old
As you give her of me, whose narrower heart
Holds not a third part of the faith and love
That my obedience bears you, though she wear
Against my will such vantage in your sight,
By my hard hap; yet would I think not so,
Nor liken you to such a trustless man
And miserable as he was, nor myself
To one so wronged a woman, and being wronged
In suffering so unpitiful as she.
Yet you put in me somewhat of her kind
That makes me like unto her in anything
That touches you or may preserve you mine
To whom alone you appertain, if that
May be called mine by right appropriated
Which should be won through faithful travail, yea,
Through only loving of you as God knows
I do and shall do all my days of life
For pain or evil that can come thereof:
In recompense of which and all those ills
You have been cause of to me, and must think
That I esteem no evils for your sake,
Let not this woman with her heartless tears
Nor piteous passion thrust me out of door

Who should sit sole and secret in your heart.
What hath she borne or I not borne for you,
And would not bear again? or by what gift
Have I set store or spared it that might go
To buy your heart's love to me? have I found
Empire or love of friends or pride or peace
Or honour or safe life or innocence
Too good things to put from me, or men's wrath,
Terror or shame or hatred of mine own,
Or breach of friends, or kingdom's wreck, or sin,
Too fearful things to embrace and make them mine
With as good will and joyous height of heart
As hers who takes love in her prosperous arms
And has delight to bridegroom? Have I not
Loved all these for your sake, and those good things,
Have I not all abhorred them? Would I keep
One comfort or one harbour or one hope,
One ransom, one resource, one resting-place,
That might divide me from your danger, save
This head whose crown is humbled at your foot
From storm that smote on yours? Would I sleep warm
Out of the wind's way when your sail was set
By night against the sea-breach? Would I wait
As might your wife to hear of you, how went
The day that saw your battle, and hold off
Till the cry came of fallen or conquering men
To bid me mourn or triumph? Hath my heart
Place for one good thought bred not of your good
Or ill thought not depending on your ill?
What hath she done that yours hath place for her

Or time or thought or pity?

Bothwell. What have I,
That yours should fix on her untimely? Nay,
Last year she was my wife and moved you not,
And now she is turned forth naked of that name
And stripped as 'twere to clothe you, comes this heat.
And fear takes fire lest she turn back or I
To thrust you forth instead: you are fair and fool
Beyond all queens and women.

Queen. There spake truth,
For then you said, most loving. But indeed
This irks me yet, this galls with doubt and fear,
That even her plea to be divorced from you
On some forepast adulterous charge, which proved
She wins her asking, leaves your hand not loose
By law to wed again, but your same deed
Frees her from you and fetters you from me;
Then stand we shamed and profitless; meseems
God's very hand can loose not us and join,
Who binds and looses; though Buccleugh makes oath
She was contracted to you first, and this
No righteous marriage; though she plight her soul
As she made proffer for our hope's sake; yea,
Though you should bring a hundred loves to swear
They had the firstlings of your faith, who kept
No faith with any, nor will keep with me,
God knows, and I, that have no warrant yet
In my lord's word here which unweds you, being
Matched with your cousin in the fourth degree,
And no proof published if the Church's grace

Were granted for it, or sought; no help of this,
If your love give not warrant; and therein
If she hath half or I have less than all,
Then have I nothing of you. Speak to him;
Bid him not break his faith, not this now mine;
Plead for me with him, father, lest he lie
And I too lose him; God shall pardon, say,
What sin we do for love, or what for wrath,
Or to defend us from the danger of men,
But to me, me, say, if he be forsworn,
That God shall not forgive it him nor I.

Archbishop. Be not too careful to confound yourself;
Those bonds are broken by God's leave and law;
Make no fresh bonds of your own fears, to do
What harm these do no more; he hath put her off:
Rest there content.

Queen. Nay, why should I then trust
He shall not put off me in heart for her?

Bothwell. Why, have your choice then, and mistrust; God's death!
I had deemed I had learnt of women's witlessness
Some little learning, yet I thought no more
Than that it was but light as air, snow, foam,
And all things light, not lighter. I would know
What men hold foolish yet that hold you wise,
If not your fear.

Queen. Doth she not love you?

Bothwell. Ay.

Queen. Hath she not cause to hate, and doth not hate,

Who sues to be put from you, for your fault
Craves leave to be cut off, as I crave leave
To take you from her hands, her gift?
Bothwell. God knows;
She may love, hate, or hate not neither love,
Or both alike; I know not.
Queen. But I know
That you can love not. Nay, then help me, God!
If I did know this I would kill myself.
Yet to more proof I would I had put your heart
Ere I gave up to it all the might of mine—
Which is but feebleness. Well, we will go;
There is no better counsel. Pardon me
If my fear seem to wrangle with my faith;
They are parts but of my love, that with itself
Strives to be master of its grief and joy
Lest either overbear it, and therewith
Put out my life. Come; all things shall be well.

SCENE X.—HOLYROOD.

Enter HERRIES *and* SIR JAMES MELVILLE.

Herries. Is the work done?
Melville. They are wedded fast; and now
I think would one of them to free herself
Give the right hand she hath given him.
Herries. What, so soon?
Came she as loth into the council-hall
Or were her answers as compelled and strange?

Melville. I have not seen for any chance till now
So changed a woman in the face as she,
Saving with extreme sickness. She was wed
In her old mourning habits, and her face
As deadly as were they; the soft warm joy
That laughed in its fair feature, and put heart
In the eyes and gracious lips as to salute
All others' eyes with sweet regardfulness,
Looked as when winds have worn the white-rose leaf;
No fire between her eyelids, and no flower
In the April of her cheeks; their spring acold,
And but for want of very heart to weep
They had been rainier than they were forlorn.

Herries. And his new grace of Orkney?

Melville. The good duke
Was dumb while Adam Bothwell with grave lips
Set forth the scandal of his lewd life past
And fair faith of his present penitence,
Whose days to come being higher than his past place
Should expiate those gone by, and their good works
Atone those evil; hardly twitched his eye
Or twinkled half his thick lip's curve of hair,
Listening; but when the bishop made indeed
His large hard hand with hers so flowerlike fast,
He seemed as 'twere for pride and mighty heart
To swell and shine with passion, and his eye
To take into the fire of its red look
All dangers and all adverse things that might
Rise out of days unrisen, to burn them up

With its great heat of triumph; and the hand
Fastening on hers so griped it that her lips
Trembled, and turned to catch the smile from his,
As though her spirit had put its own life off
And sense of joy or property of pain
To close with his alone; but this twin smile
Was briefer than a flash or gust that strikes
And is not; for the next word was not said
Ere her face waned again to winter-ward
As a moon smitten, and her answer came
As words from dead men wickedly wrung forth
By craft of wizards, forged and forceful breath
Which hangs on lips that loath it.

Herries. Will you think
This was not haply but for show, to wear
The likeness as of one not all constrained
Nor all consenting, willingly enforced
To do her will as of necessity?
That she might seem no part yet of his plot,
But as compelled by counsel of those lords
Who since her coming have subscribed by name
The paper of advice that in his cause
Declares what force of friends has Bothwell here
In Lothian and on all the border's march
To keep good order, and how well it were
She should for surety wed him whom she needs
Must wed for honour or perforce live shamed
By violence done upon her.

Melville. No; there hung

Too much of fear and passion on her face
To be put off when time shall be to unmask ;
The fire that moved her and the mounting will
While danger was and battle was to be,
Now she hath leapt into the pit alive
To win and wear the diamond, are no more :
Hope feels the wounds upon its hands and feet
That clomb and clung, now halting since the hour
That should have crowned has bruised it. No, 'tis truth;
She is heart-struck now, and labours with herself,
As one that loves and trusts not but the man
Who makes so little of men's hate may make
Of women's love as little ; with this doubt
New-born within her, fears that slept awake,
And shame's eyes open that were shut for love,
To see on earth all pity hurt to death
By her own hand, and no man's face her friend
If his be none for whom she casts them off
And finds no strength against him in their hands.

Herries. Small strength indeed or help of craft or force
Must she now look for of them ; and shall find,
I fear, no stay against men's spirits and tongues
Nor shelter in the observance of their will
That she puts on, submitting her own faith
To the outward face of theirs, as in this act
Of marriage, and the judgment now enforced
Against the allowance of the mass, albeit
With a bruised heart and loathing did she bow
That royal head and hand imperious once

To give so much of her soul's trust away;
And little shall it stead her.

Melville. So fear I;
'Tis not the warrant of an act affirmed
Against the remnants of her faith, nor form
Of this strange wedlock, shall renew to her
Men's outworn love and service; nay, and strife
Lies closer to her than fears from outward; these
Whose swords and souls attend on her new lord,
Both now for fault of pay grown mutinous,
From flat revolt they hardly have redeemed
With the queen's jewels and that English gift
Of the gold font sent hither for the prince
That served him not for christening, melted now
To feed base hands with gold and stop loud throats,
Whose strength alone and clamour put such heart
In Bothwell that he swore to hang the man
Who would not speak their banns at first, and now
But utters them with lips that yet protest
Of innocent blood and of adulterous bonds
By force proclaimed, and fraudful; and this Craig
The townsmen love, and heed not that for craft
Each day will Bothwell hear men preach, and show
To them that speak all favour, and will sit
A guest at burghers' boards unsummoned; yet
Men's hate more swells against him, to behold
How by the queen he rides unbonneted
And she rebukes his too much courtesy;
So that their world within doors and without
Swells round them doubtfully toward storm, and sees

This hot-brained helmsman in his own conceit
Even here in port, who drifts indeed at sea.

Herries. Short time will wind this up: the secretary,
Whose blood the queen would see not shed of him,
Is slipped away for Stirling, there to join
With Lindsay and the lords ere this combined,
From whom I may not now divide myself,
On the child's party. Not a hand will stay
Nor heart upon this side; the Hamiltons,
For their own ends that set this marriage on,
Will for those ends with no sad hearts behold
At others' hands her imminent overthrow.

Melville. This was the archbishop's counsel, that annulled
Last year's true marriage to procure the queen's
And even therein betray her. God mend all!
But I misdoubt me lest the sun be set
That looked upon the last of her good days.

SCENE XI.—THE SAME.

The QUEEN *and* BOTHWELL; MARY BEATON *and* ARTHUR ERSKINE *in attendance.*

Queen. Are you yet wroth?

Bothwell. Are you yet wise? to know
If I be wroth should less import than this
Which I would fain find of you.

Queen. By my life,
I think I am but wise enough to know

That witless I was ever.

Bothwell. Ay, but most,
You mean, to wed me, that am graceless more
Than witless you that wedded, in men's eyes
Who justliest judge of either; yet, by God,
Had I not grace enough to match with you,
I must have less than in their minds I have
And tongues of them that curse me; but what grief
Wrings now your heart or whets your tongue, that strikes
When the heart stirs not?

Queen. Nay, no grief it is
To be cut off from all men's company,
Watched like a thief lest he break ward by night,
My chamber door set round with men-at-arms,
My steps and looks espied on, hands and feet
Fettered as 'twere with glances of strange eyes
That guard me lest I stray; my ways, my words,
My very sleep their subject.

Bothwell. You were wont
To walk more free; I wot you have seen fair days
When you lived large i' the sun, and had sweet tongues
To sing with yours, and haply lips and eyes
To make song sweeter than the lute may; now
'Tis hard that you sit here my woeful wife,
Who use you thus despitefully, that yet
Was never queen so mated with a groom
And so mishandled; have you said so?

Queen. I?

Bothwell. Who hath put these words else in men's mouths, that prate

How you lie fast in prison? I did know
A woman's tongue keen as her faith was light,
But faith so like the wind spake never yet
With tongue so like a sword's point.

Queen. No, my lord?
'Tis well that I should hear so first of you
Who best may know the truth of your worst word.

Bothwell. Is it no truth that men so speak, and you,
By speech or silence or by change of face,
By piteous eyes or angry, give them cause
To babble of your bonds? What grace you show
Toward others is as doubt and hate of me
In these our enemies' sight, who see it and swear
You are kept in ward here of my will, and made,
Out of no trust or love but force and fear,
Thrall to my hand. Why, being but two days wed,
Must there be cause between us of dispute
For such a thing as this man, in whose name
I am crossed and slighted of your wanton will?

Queen. If he be worth no more than you conceive,
What grace I do him can hurt you?

Bothwell. I conceive!
Why, what worth is he with you, that I should
Conceive the least thought of him? Were I hurt,
Assure yourself it would be to his death;
Lay that much to your heart.

Queen. My heart is killed.
I have not where to lay it.

Bothwell. Pray you, no tears;
I have seen you weep when dead men were alive
That for your eye-drops wept their hearts' blood out;

So will not I. You have done me foolish wrong
And haply cast your fame for food to hounds
Whose teeth will strip it hour by hour more bare
Whereon they have gnawed before.

Queen. What have I done?
Speak.

Bothwell. Nay, I will, because you know not: hark,
You are even too simple and harmless; being man's wife,
Not now the first time, you should buy more wit
Though with less innocence; you have given a gift,
Out of your maiden singleness of soul
And eye most witless of misconstruing eyes,
Where you should not: this is strange truth to you,
But truth, God help us! that man's horse who was
Your husband, and whose chattels, place, and name
Lie in my hold I think now lawfully
Whence none is like to wring them, have you given
Out of my hand to one of whom fame saith
That by the witness of a northland witch
He when I die must wed you, and my life
Shall last not half a year; for in your bed
Must lie two husbands after me, and you
Shall in your fifth lord's lifetime die by fire.
Now, being but third and least in worth of these,
I would not have you die so red a death,
But keep you from all fresh or fiercer heat
Than of my lips and arms; for which things' sake
I am not blithe, so please you, to behold
How straight this lay lord abbot of Arbroath

Sits in your husband's saddle. Pardon me
That with my jealous knowledge I confound
Your virginal sweet ignorance of men's minds,
Ill thoughts and tongues unmannerly, that strike
At the pure heart which dreams not on such harm;
It is my love and care of your life's peace
Makes me thus venturous to wage words with you,
And put such troublous things in your fair mind,
Whereof God wot you knew not: and to end,
Take this much of me; live what life you may
Or die what death, while I have part in you,
None shall have part with me; nor touch nor word
Nor eye nor hand nor writing nor one thought
The lightest that may hang upon a look
Shall man get of you that I know not of
And answer not upon him. Be you sure
I am not of such fool's mould cast in flesh
As royal-blooded husbands; being no king
Nor kin of kings, but one that keep unarmed
My head but with my hand, and have no wit
To twitch you strings and match you rhyme for rhyme
And turn and twitter on a tripping tongue,
But so much wit to make my word and sword
Keep time and rhyme together, say and slay.
Set this down in such record as you list,
But keep it surer than you keep your mind
If that be changing: for by heaven and hell
I swear to keep the word I give you fast
As faith can hold it, that who thwarts me here
Or comes across my will's way in my wife's,

Dies as a dog dies, doomless. Now, your pleasure;
I prate no more.

Queen. Shall I be handled thus?

Bothwell. You have too much been handled otherwise;
Now will I keep you from men's hands in mine,
Or lack the use of these.

Queen. What, to strike me?
You shall not need; give me a knife to strike
That I may let my life out in his eye,
Or I will drown myself.

Bothwell. Why, choose again;
I cross you not.

Queen. Give me a knife, I say.

Arthur Erskine. Make not our hearts bleed, madam, as they burn
To hear what we hear silent.

Bothwell. Comfort her;
You were her chamber-knight on David's day.

Arthur Erskine. My lord, the reverence that the queen's sight bears
And awe toward her make me thus slow to set
My hand to do what work my heart bids; else
I would not doubt to stand before your grace
And make such answer as her servant may.

Queen. Forbear him, Arthur; nay, and me; 'tis I
On whom all strokes first fall and sorest smite,
Who most of all am shieldless, without stay,
And look for no man's comfort. Pray you, sir,
If it be in your will that I cast off

This heavy life to lighten your life's load
That now with mine is laden, let me die
More queenlike than this dog's death you denounce
Against the man that falls into your hate ;
Though not for love, yet shame, because I was
A queen that loved you : else you should not seem
So royal in her sight whose eyes you serve,
Nor she when I am dead with such high heart
Behold you, nor with such glad lips commend
As conqueror of me slain for her love's sake
And servant of her living in your love.
Let me die therefore queenlike, and your sword
Strike where your tongue hath struck; though not so deep,
It shall suffice to cleave my heart and end.

Bothwell. Hear you, my queen; if we twain be one flesh,
I will not have this daintier part of it
Turn any timeless hand against itself
To hurt me, nor this fire which is your tongue
Shoot any flame on me; no fuel am I
To burn and feed you; not a spark you shed
Shall kindle me to ruin, but with my foot
Rather will I tread out the light that was
A firebrand for the death of many a man
To light the pile whereon they burnt alive.
What, have I taken it in my hand to scorch
And not to light me? or hath it set fire
To so few lives already that who bears
Needs not to watch it warily and wake

When the night falls about him? Nay, the man
Were twice the fool that these your dead men were,
Who seeing as I have seen and in his hand
Holding the fire I carry through the dark
To be the beacon of my travelling days
And shine upon them ended, should not walk
With feet and eyes both heedful at what hour
By what light's leading on what ground he goes,
And toward what end: be therefore you content
To keep your flame's heat for your enemies' bale,
And for your friend that large and liberal light
That gave itself too freely, shot too far,
Till it was closed as in a lantern up
To make my path plain to me; which once lost,
The light goes out for ever.

Queen. Yea, I know;
My life can be but light now to your life,
And of no service else; or if none there,
Even as you say, must needs be quenched; and would
The wind that now beats on it and the sea
Had quenched it ere your breath, and I gone out
With no man's blood behind me.

Bothwell. Come, be wise;
Our sun is not yet sunken.

Queen. No, not yet;
The sky must even wax redder than it is
When that shall sink; darkness and smoke of hell,
Clouds that rain blood, and blast of winds that wreck,
Shall be about it setting.

Bothwell. What, your heart

Fails you now first that shrank not when a man's
Might well at need have failed him?
Queen. Ay, and no;
It is the heart that fired me fails my heart,
And as that bows beneath it so doth mine
Bend, and will break so surely.
Bothwell. Nay, not mine;
There is not weight yet on our adverse part,
Fear not, to bend it.
Queen. Yet it fails me now.
I have leant too much my whole life's weight on it
With all my soul's strength, and beneath the fraught
I hear it split and sunder. Let me rest;
I would fain sleep a space now. Who goes there?
Mary Beaton. A suitor to behold your majesty.
Queen. I will not see him. Who should make suit to me?
Who moves yet in this world so miserable
That I can comfort? or what hand so weak
It should be now my suppliant, or uplift
In prayer for help's sake to lay hold on mine?
What am I to give aid or alms, who have
Nor alms nor aid at hand of them to whom
I gave not some but all part of myself?
I will not see him.
Mary Beaton. It is a woman.
Queen. Ay?
But yet I think no queen; and cannot be
But therefore happier and more strong than I.
Yet I will see what woman's face for grief

Comes to seek help at mine; if she be mad,
Me may she teach to lose my wits and woes
And live more enviable than ye that yet
Have wit to know me wretched.

Enter JANE GORDON.

Who is this?
Are you my suitor?

Jane Gordon. I am she that was
Countess of Bothwell; now my name again
Is that my father gave me.

Queen. Ay, no more;
You are daughter yet and sister to great earls,
And bear that honour blameless; be it enough;
And tell me wherefore by that name you come
And with what suit before me.

Jane Gordon. Even but this,
To look once on you and to bid farewell
Ere I fare forth from sight.

Queen. Farewell; and yet
I know not who should in this world fare well.
Is the word said?

Jane Gordon. A little leave at last
I pray you give me: that I seek it not
For love or envy toward my sometime lord
Or heart toward you disloyal now my queen,
Let me not plead uncredited. I came
Surely with no good hope to no glad end,
But with no thought so vile of will as this,
To thrust between your hearts the care of me,

Claim right or challenge pity, melt or fret
Your eyes with forced compassion : I did think
To have kissed your hand and something said for sign
I had come not of weak heart or evil will,
But in good faith, to see how strong in love
They stand whose joy makes joyless all my life,
Whose loving leaves it loveless, and their wealth
Feeds full upon my famine. Be not wroth ;
I speak not to rebuke you of my want
Or of my loss reprove you, that you take
My crown of love to gild your crown of gold ;
I know what right you have, and take no shame
To sit for your sake humbled, who being born
A poor mean woman would not less have been
By God's grace royal, and by visible seal
A natural queen of women ; but being crowned
You make the throne imperial, and your hand
Puts power into the sceptre ; yea, this head
Of its gold circlet takes not majesty,
But gives it of its own ; this may men see,
And I deny not ; nor is this but just,
That I, who have no such honour born or given,
Should have not either, if it please you not,
That which I thought I had ; the name I wore,
The hand scarce yet a year since laid in mine,
The eye that burned on mine as on a wife's,
The lip that swore me faith, the heart that held
No thought or throb wherein I had no part,
Or heaved but with a traitor's breath, and beat
With pulse but of a liar.

Bothwell. Ay, swore I so?
Why, this was truth last year then.
Queen. Truth, my lord?
What does the fire of such a word as this
Between such lips but burn them, as mine ears
Burn that must hear by your device and hers
With what strange flatteries on her prompted lips
This dame unwedded lifts her hand unringed
To abash me with its show of faith, and make
Your wife ashamed at sight of such a love
As yet she bears you that is not your wife?
Bothwell. What devil should prick me to such empty proof
And pride unprofitable? I pray you think
I am no such boy to boast of such a spoil
As chamberers make their brag of. Let her speak
And part not as unfriends.
Queen. Madam, and you
That thus renumber and resound his vows,
To what good end I know not, in our ear,
What would you have of him whom your own will
Rose up to plead against as false, to break
His bonds that irked you and unspeak the word
That held you hand in hand? Did you not pray
To be set free from bondage, and now turn
To question with the hand that you put off
If it did well to loose you?
Jane Gordon. Truly, no;
Nor will I question with your grace in this,
Whether by mine own will and uncompelled

I only would have put that hand away
That I will say would yet have held mine fast
But for my frowardness and rancorous mind;
Let all this even be so; as he shall say
Who will say nought but with your queenly will,
Why, so will I. Yet ere I am gone, my lord—
O, not my lord, but hers whose thrall am I—
My sometime friend and yet not enemy,
If this thing not offend you, that I crave
So much breath of you as may do me right,
I pray you witness for me how far forth
And for what love's sake I took part with you
Or gave consent to our devised divorce,
And if this were for hate; for you should know
How much of old time I have hated you,
How bitter made my heart, what jealous edge
Set on mine envy toward you; spare not then
To say if out of cold or cankered heart
I sought, or yielded shamefully for spite,
To be divided from you. Nay, forbear;
Speak not, nor frown on me; you cannot say
I was your loveless or disloyal wife,
Or in my void bed on disconsolate nights
Sought comfort but of tears: nor that I held
Mine honour hurt of that which bruised my heart,
And grudged to help you to mine own most wrong
And lend you mine own hand to smite myself
And make you by mine own mouth quit of me.
This that I did, and wherefore I did this,
And if for love's or hate's sake, verily

You shall not say you know not, and the queen
Shall blame me not to put you yet in mind,
Nor think it much that I make record here
Of this that was between us : wherefore now
I take no shame at this my leave-taking
To part as one that has not erred herein,
To love too little ; this shall not be said
When one bethinks him such a woman was,
That with poor spirit or with contracted heart
I gave myself to love you, or was found
Too mean of mind or sparing of my soul
To cast for love the crown of love away,
And when you bade refuse you for my lord,
Whom, had you bidden, with my whole heart's blood
I had thought not much to purchase for my love :
But seeing nor blood nor all my body's tears
Might buy you back to love me, I was fain
That you should take them and my very life
To buy new love and life with. Sir, and now
Ere we twain part——

Queen. What, are ye parted not?
Between his lover and my lord I stand
And see them weep and wrangle ere they part,
And hold my peace for pity !

Jane Gordon. God shall judge
If with pure heart and patience, or with soul
That burns and pines, I would have said farewell ;
I crave but this much of your grace and God's,
Make me at last not angry.

Queen. Have you held

No counsel or communion with my lord
Since——I am shamed that take upon my lips
Such inquisition. If you have aught yet, speak;
I bid not nor forbid you.

Jane Gordon. Nought but this;
To unpledge my faith, unplight my love, and so
Set on his hand the seal by touch of mine
That sunders us.

Queen. You shall not take his hand.

Jane Gordon. I think not ever then to touch it more,
Nor now desire, who have seen with eyes more sad
More than I thought with sorrowing eyes to see
When I came hither; so this long last time
Farewell, my lord; and you, his queen, farewell.

[*Exit.*

Queen. Hath she made end? *while I have part in you,*
None shall have part with me; was this my lord,
Was this not you that said so?

Bothwell. Come, enough;
I am bound not to be baited of your tongues.

Queen. Bid her come back.

Bothwell. What, are you foolish? think
You twain shall look in either's eyes no more.

Queen. Why should I look in yours to find her there?
For there she sits as in a mirror shown
By the love's light enkindled from your heart,
That flashed but on me like a fen-fire lit
To lure me to my grave's edge, whence I fall

Deep as the pit of hell ; but yet for shame
Deny not her to me as me to her,
Me that have known this ever, but lacked heart
To put the thing to use I knew ; and now
For both our sakes who have loved you, play not false
But with one love at once ; take up your love
And wear it as a garland in men's sight,
For it becomes you ; if you love me not,
You have lied by this enough ; speak truth, shake hands,
Loose hearts and leave me.

Bothwell. Vex not me too long,
Vexing your own heart thus with vanity ;
Take up your wisdom that you have at will,
And wear it as a sword in danger's sight
That now looks hard upon us. Mine you are,
Love me or love not, trust me not or trust,
As yours am I ; and even as I in you,
Have faith in me, no less nor further ; then
We shall have trust enough on either part
To build a wall about us at whose foot
That sea of iron swayed by winds of war
Shall break in foam like blood ; and hurled once back,
The hearts and swords of all our enemies fallen
Lie where they fell for ever. Know but this,
And care not what is unknown else ; we twain
Have wrought not out this fortune that we have
Nor made us way to such an hour and power
To let men take and break it, while as fools
We kiss and brawl and cry and kiss again,
And wot not when they smite. For these next days,

We will behold the triumph held at Leith
And pageant of a sea-fight as set forth
With open face and spirit of joyousness
To fix this faith in all men's eyes and minds,
That while life lives we stand indissoluble :
Then shall you send out for your child again
Forth of Lord Mar's good keeping, that your heart
May here have comfort in his present sight ;
So shall all these who make his name their sword
Lie weaponless within our hand and hold,
Who are drawn in one against us, or prepare,
While we delay, for Stirling ; where by this,
I am certified on faith of trusty men,
Argyle is met with Morton, our good friends
That served us for their turn, with some that helped
To make our match and some that would have marred,
Once several-souled, now in their envies one,
As Lindsay, Athol, Herries ; and to these
Maitland is fled, your friend that must not bleed,
Your counsellor is stolen away and lives
To whet his wit against you ; but myself,
When we have shown us to the people, and seen
What eye they turn upon our marriage feast,
Will ride to Melrose, and raise up from sleep
Their hardy hearts whom now mine unfriends there
Hold in subjection ; Herries nor Lord Hume
Nor Maxwell shall have power to tie them up
When I shall bid them forth, and all the march
Shall rise beneath us as with swell o' the sea
And wash of thickening waters when the wind

Makes the sea's heart leap with such might of joy
As hurls its waves together; there shall we
Ride on their backs as warriors, and our ship
Dance high toward harbour. Put but on the spirit
You had in all times that beset your peace,
Since you came home, with danger; in those wars
That made the first years clamorous of your reign,
And in this past and perilous year of ours
Where you lacked never heart. Be seen again
The royal thing men saw you; these your friends
Shall look more friendly on our wedded faith
Seeing no more discord of our days to be,
And our bold borderers with one heart on fire
Burn in your warlike safeguard, once to strike
And end all enemies' quarrel. When we part,
At Borthwick Castle shall you look for me,
Where I will gather friends more fain of fight
Than all our foes may muster.

Queen. Sir, so be it;
But now my heart is lower than once it was,
And will not sit I think again so high
Though my days turn more prosperous than I deem.
But let that be. Come, friends, and look not sad
Though I look sadder; make what cheer we may,
For festival or fight, or shine or shower,
I will not fail you yet. God give me heart,
That never so much lacked it; yea, he shall,
Or I will make it out of mine own fears
And with my feebleness increase my force
And build my hope the higher that joy lies low

Till all be lost and won. Lead you, my lord,
And fear not but I follow; I have wept
When I should laugh, and laughed when I should weep,
And now live humbler than I thought to be;
I ask not of your love, but of mine own
I have yet left to give. Come, we will see
These pageants or these enemies; my heart
Shall look alike on either. Be not wroth;
I will be merry while I live, and die
When I have leave. My spirit is sick; would God
We were now met at Borthwick, with men's spears
And noise of friends about us; friend or foe,
I care not whether; here I am sore at heart,
As one that cannot wholly wake nor sleep
Till death receive or life reprieve me. Come;
We should be glad now; let the world take note
We are glad in spite and sight of enmities
That are but worth the hour they take to quell.

Scene XII.—Stirling Castle.

Maitland *and* Lindsay.

Lindsay. Is there such breach between them? why, men said,
When they would ride through Edinburgh and he
Bare-headed at her bridle, she would take
By force and thrust his cap upon his head
With loving might and laughing; and at Leith
They saw the false fight on the waters join

And mid-May pageants that shone down the sun,
As with glad eyes of lovers newly wed
Whose hearts were of the revel; and so soon
Are hearts and eyes divided?

Maitland. Not an hour
May she draw breath but in his eye, nor see
But whom he shall give entrance: in her sight
He thought to have slain me, but she came between
And set for shield her bosom to his sword
In her own chamber; so each day and night
By violent act or viler word than deed
He turns her eyes to water-springs of tears,
Who leaves not yet to love him; such strong hold
By flesh or spirit or either made one fire
Hath such men's love on women made as she,
For no foul speech I think nor strokes nor shame
Would she go from him, but to keep him fast
Would burn the world with fire; and no force less
Shall burn their bonds in sunder.

Lindsay. We will bring
And kindle it in their sight. They are southward fled
To meet at Borthwick; thither we design,
To raise the Merse with Hume, and with Lord Mar
And with the Douglas' following bind them round
And take them in one snare, whence one of these
Shall creep not forth with life or limb that feels
No hound's fang fasten on it; and his mate
Shall see their feet smoke with his slaughtered blood.

SCENE XIII.—BORTHWICK CASTLE.

The QUEEN *and* BOTHWELL; MARY BEATON *in attendance.*

Queen. You should be hence again: since you came in
From Melrose with no levies at your back,
We have heard no news of friends, and hear but now
That we are ringed with Morton's folk about;
How shall he not have laid unhappy hand
Upon your messenger that bare our word
Of summons to the archbishop and your friend
Balfour to be with Huntley at our side?

Bothwell. Ay, he is trapped that bore my letters hence,
I doubt not; none have feet to run aright,
Eyes to see true, hands to bring help, but they
That move them to our ruin. This Balfour,
Whom I laid trust on since our fiery night
As on a true man bound of force to me,
Has fallen in conference and device of plots,
I hear, with that lean limb of policy
That loves me not, James Melville, by whose mouth
Being warned I meant to take out of his hand
The castle-keys of Edinburgh and give
To one my closer kinsman for more trust,
He has made him friends of ancient foes, and seeks,
By no less service than pursuit of them
Who slew the king your husband, to deserve

Their favour who are risen of honest heart
But to chastise these slayers, of whom God wot
Themselves were none, nor he that hunts with them
Upon the trail of treason. O, your lords
Are worthy friends and enemies, and their tongues
As trusty as their hands are innocent,
When they see time to turn.

Queen. I would their lives
Lay all between my lips, and with one breath
I might cut all theirs off! nor tongue nor hand
Should rise of them against us, to deny
Their work disclaimed when done. What slaves are these
That make their hands red with men's secret blood
And with their tongues would lick them white, and wash
The sanguine grain out with false froth of words
From lying lips that kissed the dead to death
And now cry vengeance for him? But, my lord,
Make you haste hence to-night ere they be here
That if we tarry will beset us; I
Should hang but as a fetter on your foot,
Which should pass free forth to Dunbar, and raise
With sound even of its tread and forward speed
The force of all the border.

Bothwell. Where I go,
There shall you not be far to find; to-night
I will sleep here.

Queen. God give you rest and strength,
To make that heart which is the lord of mine
Fresh as the spirit of sunrise! for last night
You slept not well.

Bothwell. No; I had dreams, that am
No natural dreamer; I will sleep apart,
With Cranston's son to lie at hand, or wait
If I lack service.

Queen. Nay, let me be there;
I will not weary you with speech, nor break
Your sleep with servile and officious watch,
But sit and keep it as a jewel is kept
That is more dear than eyesight to its lord,
Or as mine eyes can keep not now their own,
Now slumber sits far from them. Let me wake.

Bothwell. No, not with me.

Queen. What, lest I trouble you?
Should my being there put dreams in you again,
To cross your sleep with me?

Bothwell. Belike it might.

Queen. Nay, I was no part of your dreams, I think;
You dream not on me waking nor asleep,
But if you dream on no face else nor mine,
I will be yet content.

Bothwell. Well, so it was,
I dreamt at once of either; yet I know not
Why I should tell my dream; your lord that was,
They say, would prattle of his fears by night
And faces of false peril; I was never
So loth by day to face what fear I might
As to be sick in darkness; but this dream
I would not see again. Yet was it nought;
I seemed to stand between two gulfs of sea
On a dark strait of rock, and at my foot

The ship that bore me broken ; and there came
Out of the waves' breach crying of broken men
And sound of splintering planks, and all the hull
Shattered and strewn in pieces ; and my head
Was as my feet and hands, bare, and the storm
Blew hard with all its heart upon me ; then
Came you, a face with weeping eyes, and hair
Half glimmering with a broken crown that shone
Red as of molten iron ; but your limbs
Were swathed about and shrouded out of sight,
Or shown but as things shapeless that the bier
Shows ready for the grave ; only the head
Floated, with eyes fast on me, and beneath
A bloodlike thread dividing the bare throat
As with a needle's breadth, but all below
Was muffled as with cerecloths ; and the eyes
Wept ; then came one we wot of clad in black
And smiling, and laid hands on me more cold
Than is a snake's kiss or the grave's, and thrust
Between that severed head, weeping and crowned,
That mourned upon me, and mine eyes that watched,
Her own strange head wrapped widow-like and wan
In habit of one sorrowing, but with lips
That laughed to kiss me ; and therewith at once
Your face as water flowed out of my sight,
And on mine own I felt as drops of blood
Falling, but if your tears they were or hers
Or either's blood I knew not ; on mine eyes
The great dead night shut doorwise like a wall,
And in mine ears there sprang a noise of chains

And teeth ground hard of prison-grates that jarred
And split as 'twere with sound my heart, which was
As ice that cleaves in sunder: for there came
Through that black breathless air an iron note
Of locks that shut and sounded, and being dumb
There left me quick entombed in stone, and hid
Too deep for the day's eyeshot; then I woke
With the sea's roaring and the wind's by night
Fresh in my sense, and on my travailing heart
A weight of walls and floors and upper earth
That held me down below the breach o' the sea
Where its tide's wash kept witness overhead
How went the scornful days and nights above
Where men forgot me and the living sun
As a dead dog passed over.

Queen. What, alone?
She went not with you living underground
To sit in chains and hear the sea break? nay,
She would not cast you off. This was your love,
Your love of her and need of her sweet sight,
That brought her so upon your sleep, and made
Your sense so fearful of all things but this,
And all else heard and seen so terrible
But her face only: she should comfort you,
Whom I should bring to wreck; why, so she said,
Saying how she had loved you whom I loved not; yea,
Her eyes were sad, she said, that saw forsooth
So little love between us: this sweet word,
This word of hers at parting, this it was
Of which your dream was fashioned, to give sign

How firm she sits and fast yet in your heart,
Where I was never.

Bothwell. Well, how be it soe'er,
I would not dream again this dead dream out
For less than kingly waking: so good night,
For I will sleep alone.

Queen. No, with my heart,
That lies down with you though it sleeps not. Go,
And dream of no less loving prayer than mine
That calls on God for sleep to comfort you
And keep your heart from sense of aught more hard
Than her great love who made it. [*Exit* BOTHWELL.
'Tis a night
That puts our France into my mind; even here
By those warm stars a man might call it June,
Were such nights many: their same flower-bright eyes
Look not more fair on Paris, that mine own
Again shall hardly look on. Is it not strange
That in this grey land and these grievous hours
I should so find my spirit and soul transformed
And fallen in love with pain, my heart that was
Changed and made humble to his loveless words
And force as of a master? By my faith,
That was till now fixed never and made as fire
To stand a sunlike star in love's live heaven—
A heaven found one in hue and heat with hell—
I had rather be mishandled as I am
Of this first man that ever bound me fast
Than worshipped through the world with breaking hearts
That gave their blood for worship. I am glad

He sometime should misuse me; else I think
I had not known if I could love or no.
If you could love man with my heart as now,
You would not mock nor marvel.

Mary Beaton. No, not then.

Queen. It is not in your heart: there lies not power
In you to be for evil end or good
The strange thing that is I.

Mary Beaton. There does not, no,
Nor can lie ever: could I love at all,
It were but as mean women, meanly; so
I do the best to love not.

Queen. Hark! what noise?
Look forth and see.

Mary Beaton. A sound of men and steeds;
The ring is round us; hark, the cry of Hume,
There Lindsay, and there Mar.

Queen. Call up my lord:
I will not go to vex him; but do you
Haste and awake them. [*Exit* MARY BEATON.
Be it not in mine eyes
That he first sees death risen upon his sleep,
If we must die; being started out of rest,
If he should curse me, were my heart not slain
With the opening of his eyes in wrath on mine?

Re-enter MARY BEATON.

Mary Beaton. My lord is raised and fled; but in the press
The lord of Cranston's son that slept with him
Is fallen by flight into the enemy's hands,

Who cry out for him yet as hounds that quest,
And roar as on their quarry.

Queen. Fled, and safe?

Mary Beaton. Ay, past their hands' reach that had rent him else;
Be sure he is forth, and free, or you should hear
More triumph in these cries.

Queen. God, thou art good!
Fling wide the window: I will know of them
If they be come to slay me.—What, my lords!
Are all these men of mine that throng by night
To make such show of service, and present
Strange offices of duty? Where are ye
That are chief ushers to their turbulent love
Who come thus riotously to proffer it?
Which is first here? a bold man should he be
That takes unbidden on him such desert—
Let me not say, a traitor.

Lindsay (*without*). Where is he,
The traitor that we seek? for here is none
But in your bosom.

Queen. Here then ends your search,
For here am I; and traitors near enough
I see to pierce the bosom that they seek,
Where never shall be treason till its blood
Be spilt by hands of traitors that till now
Durst never rise so near it.

Lindsay. Give him forth,
Or we will have these walls down.

Queen. What, with words?
Is there such blast of trumpets in your breath

As shook the towers down of the foes of God
At the seventh sounding? yet we stand and laugh
That hear such brave breath blown and stormlike speech
Fly round our ears: is it because your war,
My lords, is waged with women, that ye make
Such woman's war on us?

Mar (*without*). Madam, we come
To take you from his hand that is your shame,
And on his shameful head revenge that blood
Which was shed guiltless; hither was he fled,
We know, into your shelter: yield him up,
Ere yet worse come than what hath worst come yet.

Queen. There is none here to die by you but I,
And none to mock you dying. Take all your swords;
It is a woman that they came to slay,
And that contemns them; go not back for fear;
Pluck up your hearts; one valiant stroke or twain,
And ye are perfect of your work, and I
For ever quit of treason; and I swear,
By God's and by his mother's name and mine,
Except ye slay me presently, to have
Such vengeance of you and my traitors all
As the loud world shall ring with; so to-night
Be counselled, and prevent me, that am here
Yet in your hands; if ye dare slay me not,
Ye are dead now here already in my doom:
Take heart, and live to mock it.

Mar. He is fled.
Here boots us not to tarry, nor change words
With her that hath such vantage as to know

We have missed our prize and purpose here, which was
To take the traitor that is fled, and bring
Whither we now ride foiled, to Edinburgh,
Thence to return upon them.

Lindsay. Hear yet once ;
You, madam, till our day be set of doom,
Look to the adulterer's head that hence is flown,
Whose shame should now stand redder in your face
Than blushes on his hand your husband's blood,
And cleave more fast ; for that dead lord's revenge
Will we make proclamation, and raise up
The streets and stones for vengeance of your town
That sits yet sullied with bloodguiltiness
Till judgment make it clean ; whose walls to-night
Myself for fault of better ere I sleep
Will scale though gates be fastened, and therein
Bring back and stablish justice that shall be
A memory to the world and unborn men
Of murder and adultery.

Queen. Good my lord,
We thank you for the care you have and pains
To speak before you smite ; and that so long,
The deed can follow not on the swift word
For lack of spirit and breath to mate with it ;
So that they know who hear your threat betimes
What fear it bears and danger, and for fear
Take counsel to forestall it. Make good speed ;
For if your steed be shod but with fleet speech,
Ere you shall stride the wall of our good town
Its foot may trip upon a traitor's grave.

Mary Beaton. They ride fast yet; hear you their starting cry?

Queen. For each vile word and venomous breath of theirs
I will desire at my lord's hand a head
When he shall bring them bound before my foot.
If thou hast counsel in thee, serve me now:
I must be forth, and masked in such close wise
As may convey me secret to his side
Whence till our wars be done I will not part
Nor then in peace for ever: in this shape
I should ride liable to all eyes and hands
That might waylay me flying; but I will play
As in a masque for pastime, and put on
A horseboy's habit or some meaner man's
That wears but servant's steel upon his thigh
And on his sleeve the badge but of a groom,
And so pass noteless through toward Haddington
Whither my lord had mind to flee at need
And there expect me. Come; the night wears out;
The shifting wind is sharper than it was,
And the stars falter. Help me to put off
This outward coil of woman; my heart beats
Fast as for fear a coward's might beat, for joy
That spurs it forth by night on warriors' ways
And stings it with sharp hope to find his face
That shall look loving on me, and with smiles
Mock the false form and cheer the constant heart
That for his love's sake would be man's indeed.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

JOHN KNOX.

TIME: JUNE 15 AND 16, 1567.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—CARBERRY HILL.

The QUEEN, BOTHWELL, *and* SOLDIERS.

Queen. I would this field where fate and we must cross
Were other than it is; but for this thought,
On what ill night some score of years ago
Here lay our enemy's force before that fight
Which made next day the face of Scotland red
And trod her strength down under English feet,
I would not shrink in this wide eye of dawn,
In the fair front of such a summer's day,
To meet the mailed face of my traitors' host
And with bared brows outbrave it.

Bothwell. Keep that heart,
For fear we need it; look beyond the bridge
There at this hill's foot on the western bank
How strong they stand under the gathering light;
I have not seen a battle fairer set
Or in French fields or these our thirstier lands
That feed unslaked on blood.

Queen. They grow now green,
These hills and meadows that with slain men's lives

Have fed the flocks of war; come ten years yet,
And though this day should drench them with more death
Than that day's battle, not a stain shall stand
On their fresh face for witness. Had God pleased
To set a strong man armed with hands to fight
And on his head his heritage to keep,
Sworded and crowned a king, in my sad stead,
To fill the place I had not might to hold,
And for the child then bitterly brought forth,
Unseasonable, that being but woman born
Broke with the news her father's heart, who died
Desperate in her of comfort, had he sent
The warrior that I would be, and in time
To look with awless eye on that day's fight
That reddened with the ruin of our hopes
The hour that rocked my cradle, who shall say
The scathe of Pinkie Cleugh and all that blood
Had made the memory so unfortunate
Of that which was my birth-time? Being a man,
And timelier born to better hap than mine,
I might have set upon that iron day
Another mark than signs it in our sight
Red with reproach for ever.

Bothwell. Ay, my queen?
These four nights gone you met me soldierlike
Escaped from Borthwick, whence I brought you in,
Three darkling hours past midnight, to Dunbar,
Where you put off that sheath of fighting man
For this poor woman's likeness yet you wear,

Wherein you rode with your six hundred men
To meet at Haddington but two days since
These sixteen hundred border folk I led
And pass with me to Seyton; did you find
Your life more light in you or higher your heart
Inside that habit than this woman's coat
That sits so short upon you?

Queen. By my life,
I had forgot by this to be ashamed
Of the strange shape I ride in, but your tongue
Smites my cheek red as is this scanted weed
Wherein I mask my queenship; yet God knows
I had liefer ride thus forth toward such a day
Than hide my sick heart and its fears at home
In kinglier garments than this mask of mine,
Thus with my kirtle kilted to the knee
Like girls that ride in poor folks' ballads forth
For love's sake and for danger's less than mine.
Yet had I rather as your henchman ride
At your right hand and hear your bridle ring
Than sit thus womanly to watch men strike.

Bothwell. There will be parleying first; I have word of this,
That they set forth at heaviest of the night
From Edinburgh to cross our march betimes,
And by the French ambassador your friend
At Musselburgh were overtaken, whence
We look for news by him what hearts they bear,
What power and what intent; he hath ta'en on him
To stand between our parts as mediator

And bear the burden of our doubtful peace;
We must fight mouth to mouth ere hand to hand,
But the clean steel must end it.

Queen. Now would God
I had but one day's manhood, and might stand
As king in arms against this battle's breach
A twelve hours' soldier, and my life to come
Be bounded as a woman's; all those days
That must die darkling should not yet put out
The fiery memory and the light of joy
That out of this had lightened, and its heat
Should burn in them for witness left behind
On those piled ashes of my latter life.
O God, for one good hour of man, and then
Sleep or a crown for ever!

Bothwell. By God's light,
The man that had no joy to strike for you
Were such a worm as God yet never made
For men to tread on. Kiss me; by your eyes
And fiery lips that make my heart's blood hot,
I swear to take this signet of your kiss
As far into the fight as man may bear,
And strike as two men in mine arm and stroke
Struck with one sense and spirit.

Queen. If I might change
But this day with you in your stead to strike
And you look on me fighting, as for me
You have fought ere this last heat so many a prize,
Or for your own hand ere your own was mine,
I would pray God for nought again alive.

But since my heart can strike not in my hand,
Fight you for me; put on my heart to yours,
And let the might of both enforce your arm
With more than its own manhood and that strength
Which is your natural glory.

Bothwell. Sweet, I think,
When we have rid through this day's wrath, if God
Shall give us peace and kingdom and long life
And make them fruitful to us, we shall bring forth
A brood of kings as lions. Now in brief
If this shall be or shall not may we know,
For look where yonder facing to the sun
Comes up to usward from the under field
One with a flag of message; in mine eye
It is the Frenchman.

Queen. I will meet him here;
Here will I sit upon this rock for throne
And give such audience as my fortune may;
Either the last that shall salute me queen
Or first of my new reign, that from this day
Shall fearfully begin for them whose fear
Till now has held me shackled, and my will
Confined of theirs unqueenly.

Bothwell. I meantime
Will see our line in order; for this truce
Must hold not long; I would our hosts should meet
Before the heat strikes of the middle day
And this June sun drop on our soldiers' heads
Or shoot their eyes out. [*Exit.*

Queen. If God give us peace!

Yet though he give and we twain see good days,
I would not lose for many fortunate years
And empire ringed with smooth security
The sharp and dangerous draught of this delight
That out of chance and peril and keen fear
Springs as the wine out of the trampled grape
To make this hour sweet to my lips, and bid
My dancing heart be like a wave in the sun
When the sea sways between the sun and wind
As my sense now between the fears and hopes
That die to-day for ever. O, this doubt
That is not helpless but has armour on
And hands to fight with, has more joy withal
And puts more spirit into the flesh of life,
More heart into the blood and light in the eyes,
Than the utter hour of triumph, and the fight
More than the prize is worth man's prizing; yea,
For when all's won all's done, and nought to do
Is as a chain on him that with void hands
Sits pleasureless and painless. I had rather
Have looked on Actium with Mark Antony
Than bound him fast on Cydnus. O my hour,
Be good to me, as even for the doubt's sake
More than safe life I love thee; yet would choose
Not now to know, though I might see the end,
If thou wilt be good to me; do thy work,
Have thine own end; and be thou bad or good,
Thou shalt nor smite nor crown a queen in heart
Found lesser than her fortune.

Enter DU CROC.

Now, my lord,
What is their will who by such sovereign show
Should be my lords indeed? if you that came
'Twixt crown and crown ambassador pass now
Between our camps on message: but this day
Shall leave in Scotland but one sovereignty
To see that sun sink.

Du Croc. Madam, from the lords
I come on errand but for love and fear
That move me toward your highness; on whose part
I reasoning with them of their faith to you
And bond wherein their loyalties should live,
By counsel of the Laird of Lethington,
Was charged to bear you from them present word
For what they stand against your sight in arms,
And will not but by force of yours dissolve
Till it be granted.

Queen. Speak, my lord; I know
Your heart is whole and noble as their faith
Is flawed and rotten; no disloyal word
Shall make your tongue disloyal in mine ear,
Speaking for them.

Du Croc. This is their whole demand;
That from the bloody hand which holds your own
You pluck it forth and cast him from your sight
To judgment who now stands through you secure
And makes his weapon of your wounded name
And of your shame his armour; and to him

They offer fight with equal hand to hand
Of noble seconds in what sum he will
To match in blood and number with his own,
If so he list to meet their chosen of men
In personal battle, backed with less or more
Or singly sworded; but this much they swear,
They had rather make their beds in the earth alive
Than yet sit still and let this evil be.
And on your own part I beseech your grace
Set not your heart against the hearts of these
Lest it be broken of them, but betimes
Call yet to mind what grief and shame will be
Among your friends in France and all our part
To see you so with this man's hap inwound
That in his fall you cast yourself away
And hand in hand run on with him to death.

Queen. They are all forsworn that seek his death; all they
With these blown tongues now questing for his blood
By judgment set him free as innocence,
And now take back the doom they gave, and turn
On their own heads the lie: devise such shame
As lewd folk loathe, to gird themselves withal
And wear it for a jewel; seek and set
The name of liar upon them like a crown,
And bind about them as a coat and cloak
Plain treason and ungilded infamy,
Bare as a beggar; let them sue for grace,
Kneel here and ask me favour; save as thus
I treat not with them. Say how I sit here

In this mean raiment, on this naked stone,
Their queen to judge them, and with heart to weigh
Their fault against my mercy ; which yet once,
Though hardly their submission may deserve,
Say, haply they may find.

Re-enter BOTHWELL.

Bothwell. Good day, my lord.
You look far off upon me ; by your brow
And strange-eyed salutation I may read
The burden of your this day's embassy.
Is it but I whom all these ranked in arms
Are come against to battle?

Du Croc. Ay, my lord ;
No hand is raised there dangerous to the queen
Nor thought of heart not loyal.

Bothwell. Why to me?
What hurt have I done to them? none of these
But would be gladly in my place, who had
The heart to seek it ; 'tis the braver man
That ever fortune follows : what I hold
I have won not basely, but from forth her hand
Have ta'en it manlike, and with spirit as good
Have girt me to maintain it. For my part,
I seek no bloodshed, but in single field
Will meet with whom their lot shall fall upon
That shall be found fair champion on their part
To bear the general quarrel ; and to this
My state and present name shall be no bar,
But the queen's consort as her man shall fight

In any good cause simply with God's help
With any sword that shames not mine to meet.
Queen. It is my cause; me must they strike, or none;
Myself am all the quarrel; let them yield
Or give me battle.
Bothwell. Then, no need of words;
Let but your excellency stand here by
And see the show as once that envoy bound
'Twixt Hannibal and Scipio; by God's grace
This too shall be worth sight and good report
If he not fail us.
Du Croc. Madam, with rent heart
Must I take leave then of you.
Queen. Sir, farewell:
I pray you say not that you saw me weep;
These tears are not to turn the sword's edge soft
Nor made of fear nor pity; but my heart
Holds no more rule on my rebellious eyes
Than truth on those my traitors; yet I trust
Again to bring both under. [*Exit* DU CROC.
Bothwell. We must fight;
Yet had I rather take it on mine hand
Than dare the general field.
Queen. No, for God's love.
Bothwell. God hath not so much love of us to serve;
Nor would I wager on his head to-day
That he shall fight upon our side. Look there;
They are at point to cross; even now you see
The first glint on them stirring of the sun
As they set forth to make by the eastern bank

Along the meadows edgeways towards Dalkeith
Before they turn in wheel and take the hills;
I see their bent of battle; yet we keep
The slopes and crest here with our covering lines
If they stand fast.

Queen. What, have you fear of that?

Bothwell. I cannot tell; the day grows fiery hot:
I would we might close in at once and strike
Before the noon burn; all the pause we make
Who stand here idle watchers till they join
Takes off some heart from us for weariness
And gives us doubt; I would the field were set.

Queen. Why should not we that wait for them and chafe
Break rather on them coming, and brush off
Their gathering muster from the hillskirts there
With one sheer stroke of battle as from heaven
Right on them hurling down with all our host
Out of these heights ere they made head below?

Bothwell. No, my sweet captain; we must hold this fast,
This height of vantage, and keep close our ranks
As I have ranged in order: see again,
How they sweep round and settle fast in file
There on the ridge of Cowsland, with their backs
Turned on the sun that climbs toward noon too fast,
And in their front that hollow gap of hill
Three crossbow-shots across; so far apart
We look upon each other for a breath
And hold our hands from battle; but you see

How soon both sides must lash together: yea,
I would we might not hold off yet an hour
But close at once and end.

Queen. That burgh below,
Is it not Preston Pans? These hills are set
As stages for the show of such high game
As is played out for God's content on earth
Between men's kings and kingdoms; yet I think
He that beholds hath no such joy o' the game
As he that plays, nor can the joy be known
Save of man only, that man has to play
When the die's throw rings death for him or life.
How clear the wind strikes from the mounting sun—
I am glad at heart the day we have of fight
Should look thus lively on both sides that meet
Beneath so large an open eye of heaven.
The wind and sun are in my blood; I feel
Their fire and motion in me like a breath
That makes the heart leap. Dear, I too have read
The tale of Rome whence lightly you chose out
A likeness for us; but the parts we bear,
We are to play them with a difference, take
A fairer end upon us though we fall
Than they that in their hazard were most like
To this our imminent fortune: had I been
She for whose lips love let the round world fall
And all man's empire founder, on that day
When earth's whole strengths met on the warring sea
And side with side clashed of the kingdomed world,
I had not given my galleys wings for fear

To bear me out of the eye of battle, nor
Put space of flight between me and my love,
More than I think on this wave's edge that foams
To leave our chance unshipwrecked, or forsake
My more imperial Antony.

Bothwell. Would that now
We stood less near their hazard; on our part
I fear to see the lines already melt
If we hold longer off, and this firm front
Unfix itself and with no stroke dissolve
As snows in summer: half my folk by this
For thirst are fallen upon the wine-casks there
We brought from Seyton; and for those that stand,
We have not half their hearts upon our side
Whose hands are armed to uphold it. I must fight
With whom they choose, and take upon my hand
The day with all its issue: if our cause
Be set upon the general cast of fight,
It is but lost. Let messengers be sent
To know of the enemy if his challenge hold
Which I stand armed to answer; but no Scot
Shall bear the message and betray our need:
Two Frenchmen of your guard shall cross, and bring
Their fighter's name back that my sword must know
And we twain meet and end it in fair field
Between these ranks; and for my single part,
I am glad the chance should hang but on my hand
And my sole stroke determine the dim war
That flags yet in the dark and doubt of fate
Till mine arm fix it fast, and in God's sight

Confirm and close the chapter of it. Come,
Choose you your envoys.

Queen. Nay, choose you the man
That you will fight with; let him be not one
Who had no part with us in Darnley's blood,
So God shall strike not on his unjust side
Who fights against you.

Bothwell. 'Faith, if God were judge,
He should not do us right to approve their cause
Who helped us to that slaying, and in its name
Take on them now to accuse us, and appeal
As guiltless to him against their proper deed
And this right hand that wrought but with their will;
Wherefore so far forth as it hangs on God
From such a champion I should bear the bell,
If he be righteous; which to assure you of,
That even for God's sake you may feel no fear,
Let Morton meet me.

Queen. O, that two-tongued knave!
The worst of all my traitors, whom I spared
And should have slain when you had brought him home
To help despatch his friend that had been! nay,
Him shall you meet not: he shall die no death
So brave as by your sword; the axe thinks long
To clasp his cursed neck; your hand, dear lord,
Shall not redeem it.

Bothwell. Come, content you, sweet;
Him I must meet, or other; and myself
Care not if one that struck with us it be
Or one that struck not; only for your ease,

To make you trustful for God's judgment's sake
And confident of justice, I thought well
To choose a man of counsel with us then
And on this challenge fight with him, that God
Might witness with us of his treacherous cause
If I should win the field; but by this hand,
I put more trust in it and in my sword
Than in God's hand or judgment. Have no fear;
What is our cause you know, and in what right
We stand here armed; vex not your constant heart
To seek for help or warrant more than this,
Which if it cannot stand us yet in stead
It shall avail not to devise fresh means
To underprop with prayer and trust in God
And stay our souls with footless faith or hope
That other might will aid our right than ours.
Here shall we try it: and you, sustain your spirit
Still at its height and poise of fortitude
Firmly to front this infirm face of things
That changes on us gazing, and each hour
Shifts as the wind that shapes it; fear nor hope,
Bethink yourself, shall make or unmake fate,
Nor faith unbuild or build it, but that end
Will be at last that will be. So, keep heart;
Choose you two messengers for trust and speed
While I go form again these lines of ours
That break and loosen in the enemy's sight,
If time shall let reshape their ranks, and mend
The breach of their defection; in short space
Shall we have answer back whom I must meet,

And then my sword shall take this day's chance up
And ease us of its trouble. Nay, make haste;
Too long I stand yet here; send off at once
Our message, and bid speed their word again
Before our battle melt out of our hands
And we be ta'en with no man at our back.

SCENE II.—THE CAMP OF THE LORDS.

MORTON, LINDSAY, DU CROC, KIRKALDY *of* GRANGE, *and others.*

Morton. Will she not let him fight?
Kirkaldy. With no mean man,
Or lesser than himself; he shall not mate
With me nor Tullibardine; we must find
One equal to make proffer of his hand,
And by these messengers again returned
That brought her first word and took back our own
Himself now bids you forth by name to take
This justice on your sword.
Morton. And by my hand,
I am as glad as of his present death
That I should be the man of all chosen out
To lay his death upon him. Let him know
I am armed by this for answer.
Lindsay. Nay, my lord;
Who fights with Bothwell on this general plea
For all the land's sake, should not only bear
The right upon his sword of this large cause,

But stand in the eye of all the land so far
From all men's charge or any man's conceit
That might repute him touched or mixed at all
With Bothwell's works, or once but on his part
Suspected in time past or glanced upon
Of enemies' eyes as parcel of his act,
That no sharp tongue on earth might find the mean
To tax his victory with unrighteousness
If he should conquer,—as were yours the sword
I doubt not it should surely—nor dispute
The justice and pure truth that on our side
Took up this challenge. You, they know, were one
Of that dead man once wronged, and sworn, they say,
To turn his treacheries on his head alive
And with his own lie pierce him as a sword;
He never did me wrong, nor gave men cause
To deem his death a thing that I should seek
As just and natural part of my desire;
So shall none hold it questionable or strange
If I should stand against his slayer in arms
As to do battle on the dead man's part
That was toward me no traitor.

Morton. Well, my lord,
Take you then this upon you; to your hand
I shall not grudge to yield that honour up
Which none more noble in the world might wield
Nor heart more true deserve; in sign whereof
Here from mine own side I ungird the sword
Which was my grandsire's, whose two-handed stroke
Did suchlike service as shall you to-day

To Scotland, in his hand that belled the cat,
When other slaves that clung about the throne
Made the land foul as this doth; to which end
I gird you with it, that its edge again
May lop as high a dangerous head away
And shear a weed as poisonous. This it was
That drove to death even with its lift and flash
The crew of Cochrane, as in scorn to smite
Their necks that craved the halter, and were bowed
Before the light and wind but of its stroke
Down to the dust and death; and this again
Struck with one blow to hell by Fala brook
Spens of Kilspindie, who being overblown
With favour and light love of the fourth James
Gave with his life all these to Douglas up
At the first change of sword-play; from such hand
By heritage I have it, as from mine
You now, my lord, by gift; and I well think
That in those great dead hands of Bell-the-Cat
It did no worthier work than ere we sleep
This land in yours shall see it.

Lindsay. Sir, with glad heart
I take the burden to me thankfully
That this great gift lays on; as with my hands
I strip this armour off and take from yours
To gird my body left else weaponless
This the most prosperous and most noble steel
That ever did truth right, so from my soul
God witness me that I put off all thought
Save of his justice to be served and shown,

And keep no memory more to enforce my hand
That he for whose dead sake I am girt to fight
With one that slew him was of my kindred blood,
Nor this mine own foe that I seek to slay,
But only that I stand here single-souled
For this land's sake and all its noble brood,
To do their judgment on his murderous head
Who is their general traitor; and I pray
Here on my knees before these warlike lines [*Kneeling.*
That God on whom I call will equally
This day preserve and punish in men's sight
The just and unjust that he looks upon,
With blameless hand dividing their just doom
To one and other; yea, as thou art Lord,
With eye to read between our hearts, and hand
To part between us punishment and grace,
Hear, God, and judge: and as thy sentence is
So shall man's tongue speak ever of this day
And of his cause that conquers.

Morton. Laird of Grange,
While these that twice brought message from the queen
Bear now this last news back of what they hear,
Lest when the traitor knows whom he shall meet
His foul heart fail him and his false foot flee
By what way forth is left him toward Dunbar,
Take you two hundred horse, and with good speed
Cross to the right beyond this hollow ground
And cut him off; so though he fain would fly
And she stand fast or follow, yet we hold
As in one toil the lioness and the wolf

That clomb by night into the lion's bed,
Who stand now staked about with nets and ringed
With pikes and hounds of hunters, glare at bay
With eyes and teeth that shine against us yet,
But the fierce feet are trammelled in our toils
Nor shall the tongues lap life again of man.

Du Croc. Ay, lion-like, my lord, she bears herself,
As who should shake all spears or shafts away
Like leaves that fell upon her, and all fears
As grains of dust brushed off; but he too makes
Such gallant show at need of such good heart
As in this utter peril where he stands
Might win for one that had no unjust cause
Pity and praise of enemies, and for him
At least such mingled and discoloured fame
As falls not on a coward; nor can men
Report him in his end and sore extreme
But as a soldier tried of hand and brain,
Skilful and swift, with heart to match his eye
And wit to serve them; could these yet avail
To ransom him by spirit of soldiership
And craft with courage tempered as with fire
To wield with fiery cunning the wide war,
He should not fall but mightily, nor cease
But with a strife as earthquake.

Morton. Well, my lord,
With no such strife we think to win him.—Go,
And if they send again to treat with us
Speak you with her and bring us once more word.

SCENE III.—THE QUEEN'S CAMP.

The QUEEN *and* BOTHWELL.

Queen. Are we quite lost?

Bothwell. Ay, if I fight not: but
I will not die and fight not.

Queen. What, no help?
Is there not left a score of manlike men
To stand and strike round us that in their ring
May fight enclosed and fall where none shall fly?
Are all our strengths slid from us? not one troop
That has not piecemeal dropped with shame away?
Not some twelve friends to back us yet and die
As never men died nobler?

Bothwell. No, not three:
My levies there of Lothian and the Merse
Are slipped away like water; of your men
Not yet four hundred lie along the heights,
Nor half will stay of these a half-hour hence.
Look too where yonder rides about the hill
The Laird of Grange between us and Dunbar
As to make onset with two hundred horse
Thence where the way is smooth, while those in front
Charge up the hill right on our unfenced camp
And their trap's teeth shut on us. This remains
Of all our chance, this one way to make end,
That while they yet refuse me not a man
To bear the day's weight on his sword and mine
I go to meet whom they soever choose

With no more question made; and this I will,
If yet they grant me but their meanest man
For opposite as equal.

Queen. Have they hearts,
That have you for their fiery star of fight
To see and not to follow? That I could
But give mine own among all these away
And with the parcels of it portioned out
Divide myself into a hundred hearts
Of manlier-spirited blood, to raise us up
For these a tribe of soldiers! Speak to them,
And they will hear and hunger to go on
Full of your words to death; yea, all as I
Will thirst to die around you. O my God!
What is their blood that it can kindle not
To be so called of such a chief to die,
To hear his words and leap not? Hast thou made
Such stuff of man's flesh as we take for man,
And mixed not soul enough to serve the hound
Who gives for love his life up? These go back,
These that might die, they start aside from death,
They have no joy to close with it, but fear,
These that I deemed, come what might worst on us,
Should fall with face and heart one fire of joy
To ride on death and grapple him and die.
Have I not heard of men once in the world?
I see none only but mine only love,
Who finds not one to follow. You shall fight,
And if we thrive not shame them with your end
As I with mine ensuing. That I might stand

Your second, and my sword be page to yours,
As on your death my death should wait at need
And halt not after! No, you shall not die.
O miserable white hanging hands, that rest
Baffled and bloodless! let your kingdom go
Let all things pass together; what of price
Should ye keep back that could not fight for him
Who falls for lack of seconds? Nay, the fault
Comes all of me that fail him, I it is
Bring down that high head to the earth with mine,
That helmless head, for my sake; O, for love's,
Kiss me, and kill me! be not wroth, but strike,
For if I live I shall but deal more death
And where I would not shall the more destroy,
Living and loving; yea, whom I would save,
Him shall I slay the surelier; save then me,
Lest I do this and dying abhor myself,
Save me and slay; let not my love again
Kill more than me, that would have shed my blood
To spare the blood I shed; make me now sure;
Let me cease here.

Bothwell. Peace, and give heed; you see
Whither the day has brought us, and what hope
Holds anywhere of rescue; this one lot
Lies in my hand by fortune to be drawn,
That yet by God's and by our enemies' grace
I may fight singly though my whole world fail
And end no less than soldier. Now, my queen,
As you are highest of women's hearts that live
And nobler than your station stands your soul—

As you had never fear, and in this past
As ever you have loved me—by such sign
And in such name I charge you, put me not
In this great need to shame; let me go forth
As should yourself being king, had you the cause
That our linked loves put on me; by that heart
That is so fain within you to be man's,
Make me not meaner than the man I am
Nor worthless of the name; think with what soul
Would you stand up to battle in my stead,
And wrong me not to pluck that prize away
Which were you I you would not yield to me
Nor I would ask of you; desire not this,
To have me for your sake so vile a thing,
When I should rise up worthiest, that no man
Could bear such name and live; bid me not be,
Because you love me that are first on earth
And crowned of queens most royal, such a slave
As might not seek and be not spit upon
The foulest favour that is given for gold
From lips more vile than all things else but I
Who durst not fight for you; make me not this;
Let me die rather such a man as might,
Having your love, had fortune loved him too,
Have lived beside you kinglike, and not left
Less memory than a king's.

Queen. O, you shall go:
Look how I hold you not; yes, you shall fight,
And I sit strengthless here.—You shall not yet;
If I did know that God were with my heart,

Then should you go indeed; could I sit sure
My prayer had power upon him, and my cause
Had made him mine to fight for me, and take
My charge and this field's issue in his hand,
I would not doubt to send you. Nay, myself
Will speak to those my soldiers; they will fight;
They shall not choose for shame who hear me speak
But fear to fight not. O, for all this yet,
If they were men about me, they would sweep
Those traitors from the hill-side as a wind
And make me way to live. What, if I speak,
If I kneel to them, each man by his name,
Bid him fight for me though I be not king,
His king to lead him—as, had I been born
My father's son, they should have fought, and found
A king to fight for and a sword to lead
Worth many a good sword's following—nay, but these
That will not fight for you whose sword they see
Worth all their swords to follow, for no king's
Would they take heart to strike. Love, you shall go;
Send out a flag to bid one come and say
Who dares of all fight with you. Why, methought
This march-folk loved you and your sword's bright name
That burned along their borders; is there left
No such fierce love of theirs and faith at need
To do us soldier's service?

Bothwell. Look, and see;
Their ranks unknit themselves and slide more fast
From the bare slopes away whereon they stand

Than the last leaves or the last snows that fade
From off the fields or branches: and this thaw
Speaks not our spring, but winter. Let them pass;
If I may stand but in mine enemy's face,
One foot of ours shall slip not, and one hand
Be reddened on our side. I will go send
Word with your flag of truce by Ormiston,
To bid their spokesman to us. [*Exit.*

Queen. What am I worth,
That can nor fight nor pray? my heart is shut
As a sealed spring of fire, and in mine ears
This air that holds no thunder but fair day
Sounds louder than a stricken brazen bell
That rings in a great wind, or the blown sea
That roars by night for shipwreck.

Re-enter BOTHWELL *with* KIRKALDY.

Bothwell. Here is he
That bring our lords' will with him, and shall show
But in your private ear; I while you please
Will wait apart upon you. [*Retires.*

Queen. Is it you,
Is it my friend of France, my knight and friend,
Comes on such errand in mine extreme need
To me that honoured him? Sir, time has been
That had one asked me what man most on earth
I would for trust have sought the service of
In such sore straits as this, I had found no name
But yours to leap the first upon my lips,
On whom I have seen my father the French king

Point with his hand, saying, *Yonder goes there one*
Of the most valiant men in all our age,
And ever would he choose you on his side
In all his pastimes for your manhood's sake
And might in jousts of men and gallant games,
And when they shot for mastery at the butts
Would make you shoot two arrows still for one,
And took delight beyond all shots of theirs
To see how far forth would your great shaft fly,
Sped for his pleasure ; and my heart grew great
For my land's sake whereof your strength was made,
That bore such men for honour ; and the best
Who served my father Henry in his wars
Looked reverently upon you horsed at head
Of your brave hundred men that rode with you,
And never the great constable of France
Would speak to you uncovered as to one
Less than his own place worthy ; and your hand
Here on these marches hath not lost its praise
For many as fair a stroke as overthrew
Between our ranks and the English in mid field
Lord Rivers' brother, fighting for this land
That with a tongue as true and serviceable
You strove in speech to save the freedom of,
That by no policy it should be subdued
To a French province ; so for faith and love,
For valour, wisdom, and for gentleness,
I wist no Scot had worthier name alive :
Shall I say now I have no deadlier foe ?

[KIRKALDY *kneels.*

I do not bid you kneel; speak, and stand up;
I have no help or comfort of men's knees,
Nor pleasure of false worship; well I know,
For all knees bowed, how hearts and hands are bent
Of mine own men against me. Speak, I pray;
I am as their servant bound who speak in you
And open-eared to hear them.

Kirkaldy. From the lords,
Madam, no word I have to bring but one,
That from this field they will not part alive
Without the man in bonds they came to seek;
Him will they take, or die: but on your part
They have no thought that is not set to serve
And do you honour, would but you forsake
The murderer of your husband, who to you
Can be no husband, being but lately wed
To the earl of Huntley's sister and your friend
By your own mean and favour.

Queen (to Bothwell). Hold, my lord;
Let not your man give fire.—Sir, guard yourself;
See you not where one stands to shoot at you?—
You will not do me this dishonour, seeing
I have given my faith he should come safely through
And go back safe?

Bothwell. Why, let him then, and say
That I will yet maintain my proffered cause
To fight with any that shall challenge me
Of the king's murder.

Kirkaldy. Sir, the first was I
To let you wit myself would fight with you

Upon that quarrel; and the first refused,
As being nor earl nor lord nor mate of yours,
But a poor baron only; the like word
You sent to Tullibardine; in whose place
Stands now my lord of Lindsay, if your heart
Yet fail you not to meet him, as it seems
Now to grow cold in shadow of his sword
That hangs against you in the air advanced,
Darkening your sight and spirit.

Bothwell (*to the Queen*). Shall this be said,
This shame go forth for ever through the world
Of one that held you by the wedded hand
And loosed it even for fear? Now, let me go:
There is no way now but the best, and this
You shall no more forbid me: one last time
I do implore you make not of your love
The branding-iron that should sign me slave
In sight of all men always, and on you
Stamp the vile name of wife to no true man
But harlot of a coward: who shall spare
To throw that name and shame on such a love
As came to such an end as ours shall come
If here its sun set bloodless, but more red
With shame than blood could brand it?

Queen. I have thought
And set my heart against all chance to come
Of blame or blood that ever shall mark me;
Alone I take it on mine only hand,
And will not yield this one thing up to yours,
Who have yielded all things else, and this I would,

But that I may not with my soul alive.
Sir, if my lords within whose hand I am
Shall stand content to let my husband go,
Into their ward will I give up myself
On what good terms shall please them to call good,
So he may pass forth freely with such friends
Of these that have not hands enough to fight
As shall cleave to him; I pray you make good speed,
And let this day have end.

Kirkaldy. Madam, I go. [*Exit.*

Queen. Do not speak yet: a word should burst my heart;
It is a hollow crystal full of tears
That even a breath might break, and they be spilt
And life run out with them; no diamond now,
But weaker than of wax. Life of that heart,
There is but one thing hath no remedy,
Death; all ills else have end or hope of end
And time to work their worst before time change;
This death has none; there is all hope shut fast,
All chance bound up for ever: change nor time
Can help nor comfort this. You shall not die;
I can hold fast no sense of thought but this,
You shall not.

Bothwell. Well, being sundered, we may live,
And living meet; and here to hold the field
Were but a deadly victory, and my hand
The mockery of a conqueror's; we should pass
No less their prisoners from the field thus won
Than from these lists defeated. You do well;

They dare not urge or strain the power they have
To bring me prisoner where my witness borne
Might show them parcel of the deed and guilt
For which they rise up to lay hold on me
As upright men of doom, and with pure hands
To hale me to their judgment. I will go,
Till good time bring me back; and you that stay,
Keep faith with me.

Queen. O, how does one break faith?
What are they that are faithless? by my love,
I cannot tell or think how I should lie,
Should live and lie to you that are my faith,
My soul, my spirit, my very and only God,
My truth and trust that makes me true of heart,
My life that feeds and light that lightens me,
My breath and blood of living. Doth God think
How I shall be without you? what strange breath
Shall my days draw, what strange blood feed my life,
When this life that is love is gone from them
And this light lost? Where shall my true life go,
And by what far ways follow to find love,
Fly where love will? Where will you turn from me?

Bothwell. Hence will I to Dunbar, and thence again
There is no way but northward and to ship
From the north islands; thence betimes abroad
By land or sea to lurk and find my life
Till the wheel turn.

Queen. Ah God, that we were set
Far out at sea alone by storm and night

To drive together on one end, and know
If life or death would give us good or ill
And night or day receive, and heaven or earth
Forget us or remember !—He comes back ;
Here is the end.

Bothwell. But till time change his tune ;
No more nor further. We shall find our day.

Queen. Have we not found ? I know not what we shall,
But what hath been and is, and whence they are,
God knows if now I know not. He is here.

Re-enter KIRKALDY.

Kirkaldy. Madam, the lords return by me this word,
With them must you go back to Edinburgh
And there be well entreated as of friends ;
And for the duke, they are with one mind content
He should part hence for safe and present flight ;
But here may tarry not or pass not free.
This is the last word from them by my mouth.

Queen. Ay is it, sir ; the last word I shall hear—
Last in mine ear for ever : no command
Nor threat of man shall I give ear to more,
That have heard this.—Will you not go, my lord ?
It is not I would hold you.

Bothwell. Then, farewell,
And keep your word to me. What, no breath more ?
Keep then this kiss too with the word you gave,
And with them both my heart and its good hope
To find time yet for you and me. Farewell. [*Exit.*

Queen. O God! God! God!
Cover my face for me:
I cannot heave my hand up to my head;
Mine arms are broken.
Is he got to horse?
I do not think one can die more than this.
I did not say farewell.
Kirkaldy. My lord is gone.
Queen. Whom spake I to? I have no woman here.
All these men's eyes have seen my naked face
Wrung without tears for anguish, and no hand
Hide my blind eyes if haply they might weep
Great drops of blood and fiery.—Laird of Grange,
I yield myself upon such terms to you
As in these lords' name you rehearsed to me;
Have here my hand for sign.
Kirkaldy. Upon this hand
I lay the loyal witness of my lips
For duteous heart and service, and crave leave
That I may lead your highness through these ranks
Where at the hill's foot we may find your friends
Who shall come forth to meet you as their queen
With all fair reverence.
Queen. Lead me to my lords;
For one so poor a servant as I am
Here are too many masters. I could pray,
But that they lack my service and should chafe
If I dwelt long upon my prayer and let
My duty sleep or slacken toward them; else

I could pray God to shut up from these lands
His hand and eye of favour, that no dew
Might breed herefrom and no bloom break again
Nor grass be glad for ever; rain nor sun
Comfort their cankered face and hardening heart,
Nor hand that tilled or foot that trod of man
Pass and not curse them. Let me look but once
Upon this hill whereon till this ninth hour
Mine enemies' hands have crucified my heart.
The sun burns yet and the stream runs; nor eye
Nor ear have these nor pity. Come, I talk,
Who had no mind; God will not heed me; come.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—THE CAMP OF THE LORDS.

MORTON, HUME, LINDSAY, *&c.*

Morton. What, is the Frenchman gone?

Lindsay. With heavy cheer,
By this to set sad foot in Edinburgh.

Morton. There should we be by nightfall; and you see
How the day reddens downward, and this hill
Hath all its west side fiery; he hath done
The queen and us small service, to put off
Her hour of yielding. Look, the last spears left
Begin to move in sunder; there he flies,
The traitor, with his heartless handful backed
That yet for fear cling to him: and on this side

Grange leads her down the hill between our horse,
Who comes not like one captive.

Enter the QUEEN *and* KIRKALDY.

Queen. Tell me, sirs,
Are they my doomsmen whom I come to find
And those your headsmen who stand sworded there
And visored soldier-like, that cry on me
To burn and slay me? let me have quick doom,
And be beyond their crying.

Morton. Madam, I think
You cannot fear of us a deadly doom,
Nor shall you find. Silence those throats, I say.

Queen. I have not said I feared; nor shall there come
For you that lying breath upon my lips.
What will ye do with what of me ye have
If not what these tongues cry for?

Morton. Some man ride—
You, Laird of Grange, with two or three at back,
And with the flatlong stroke of your good swords
Smite their mouths dumb. Madam, take you no heed;
They shall not hurt you.

Queen. Sir, no heed have I;
I think these common haters shall not hurt
Indeed, nor smite me but with tongues; 'tis you,
My good lords only, from whose noble hands
I look to take my death, who would not lose
Nor lack this royal office. For my sake
Do them no hurt, I pray, who are but your mouths

As you their hands; I see no choice of you,
Or them the lesser traitors.

Hume. I will go:
Ride you that way, sir, by their ranks who shout,
As I this side; for every way men hear
How the field rings that all the hills roar back
With noise of names and cries to burn the whore
And murderess of her husband: spare no strokes
To shame or smite them silent.

Queen. You, my friends,
Good servants that have care of my good name,
And loyal lovers—of your love and grace,
May it please you show me whither I must go
To find what face of death? or if yet none,
And yet ye have not the hardy hearts to slay,
To uncrown and slay me, I require you then
Deliver me into my kinsmen's hands
Of the house of Hamilton, in whose good ward
I am content to abide men's evil will
With honourable surety; which refused,
Of life nor honour shall I hold me sure
For all your vows and voices, but esteem
My life to be as all your honours, dead.

Morton. Madam, with mocks you cannot make us mad,
To bring you to their trustless hands whose ward
Should be to you but dangerous, and to us
And all this kingdom's hope in heritage
And all men's good most mortal. You must go
With us to Edinburgh, and being made safe

Abide the judgment there that shall not fall
By fierce election of men's clamorous mouths
Whose rage would damn you to the fire-clad death,
But by their sentence who shall do no wrong,
If justice may with honour make them sure
And faith defend from error.

Queen. Ay, my lord?
I shall be doomed then ere I die, and stand
Before their face for judgment who should kneel
To take my sentence as a scourge, and bear
What brand my tongue set on them? Nay, ye are mad;
Kings have been slain with violence and red craft
Or fallen by secret or by popular hands,
But what man heard yet ever of a king
Set to the bar of his own men to plead
For life with rebels' reasons, and wage words
With whoso dare of all these baser born
Rise up to judge him? Surely I shall die,
Be rent perchance in pieces of men's fangs,
But of their mouths not sentenced: in fair field
That only steel that bids a king's neck stoop
Is the good sword that in a warlike hand
Makes his head bow and cuts not off his crown
But with the stroke of battle; who hath seen
By doom of man a king's head kingdomless
Bow down to the axe and block? so base an edge
Can bite not on such necks. Let me bleed here,
By their swift hands who ravin for my blood,
Or be assured how if ye let me live
I live to see you die for me as dogs:

Ye shall be hanged on crosses, nailed on rows,
For birds to rend alive; ye shall have doom,
A dog's doom and a traitor's, and the cord
Strangle the sentence in your labouring lips
And break the plea that heaves your throat and leaves
Your tongue thrust forth to blacken; ye shall wage
Words and try causes with the worms and flies
Till they leave bare your bones to sun and wind
As shame shall leave your titles. Was it you
[*To* LINDSAY.
That were to fight before me with my lord?
Give me your hand, sir; by this hand of yours
I swear for this thing yet to have your head,
And so thereof assure you.

Morton. Bid the camp
Strike and set forth behind us. Sirs, to horse;
And, madam, be not yet so great of speech
As utterly to outwear your spirit of strength
With pain and passion that can bear no fruit
But wind and wrath and barren bitterness.
Vex not yourself more than your foes would vex,
Of whom we would be none that ride with you
From them to guard you that would lay red hands
On you yet faint and weak from this fierce day.

Queen. My body and head wax faint, but not my heart;
I have yet there fire enough for all of you,
To burn your strengths up that my feebler limbs
Can make my heart not yield to nor bow down,
Nor fear put out its fires. Come, worthy lords,

And lead me to my loving town again
That bears your heads not yet above its gates
Where I shall see them festering if I live. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—EDINBURGH. A ROOM IN THE PROVOST'S HOUSE.

Enter MAITLAND *and* PROVOST.

Maitland. Are the gates fast?

Provost. Ay; but the street yet seethes
With ebb and flow of fighting faces thronged
And crush of onset following on her heel
Where she came in and whence at her own call
You drove them off her; and above the ranks
Flaps the flag borne before her as she came
Wrought with the dead king's likeness; and their cry
Is yet to burn or drown her. It were but
A manlike mercy now for men to show
That she should have some woman's hand of hers
To tend her fainting who should be nigh dead
With fear and lack of food and weariness.

Maitland. Nay, if she die not till she die for fear,
She must outlive man's memory; twice or thrice
As she rode hither with that sable flag
Blown overhead whereon the dead man lay
Painted, and by him beneath a garden tree
His young child kneeling, with soft hands held up
And the word underwritten of his prayer
Judge and avenge my cause, O Lord—she seemed

At point to swoon, being sick with two days' fast,
And with faint fingers clung upon the rein
And gaped as one athirst with foodless lips
And fair head fainting; but for very scorn
Was straightway quickened and uplift of heart,
And smote us with her eyes again, and spoke
No weaker word but of her constant mind
To hang and crucify, when time should be,
These now her lords and keepers; so at last
Beneath these walls she came in with the night,
So pressed about with foes that man by man
We could but bring her at a foot's pace through
Past Kirk of Field between the roaring streets,
Faint with no fear, but hunger and great rage,
With all men's wrath as thunder at her heel,
And all her fair face foul with dust and tears,
But as one fire of eye and cheek that shone
With heat of fiery heart and unslaked will
That took no soil of fear.

Provost. What shall be done
When sentence shall pass on her?

Maitland. By my will
She shall not die nor lose her royal name,
Wherein the council only shall bear rule
And take to its own hand the care to wreak
On her false lord now fled our general wrong,
Who being but overtaken of its sword
Shall be divorced at once from her and life.

Provost. But this shall not content the common will,
Nor theirs who bind and loose it with their tongues

And cry now for her blood; the town is loud
With women's voices keener than of men
To call for judgment on her and swift death
Sharp as their anger.

Maitland. Ay, the time is mad
With noise of preachers and the feminine spleen
That of mere rage and blind mobility
Barks in brute heat for blood; but on these tongues
The state yet hangs not, nor the general weal
Is swayed but by the violent breath of these.
Here sits she safe.

Provost. I would I knew it; her mood
Is as a wind that blows upon a fire,
And drives her to and fro: she will not eat,
But rages here and there and cries again
On us for traitors, on her friends for help,
On God for comfort of her cause and crown
That of his foes and hers is violated,
And will not stint her clamours nor take rest
For prayer nor bidding.

Maitland. I will speak with her
Ere I go hence; though she were mild of mood,
The task were hard with Knox for opposite
To bend the council to such policy
As might assure her but of life, which thus
She whets the weapon in his tongue to take. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.—ANOTHER ROOM IN THE SAME.

The QUEEN *and an Attendant.*

Queen. Wilt thou be true? but if thou have not heart,
Yet do not, being too young to sell man's blood,
Betray my letter to mine enemies' hands
Where it should be a sword to smite me with;
If thou lack heart, I say, being but a boy,
Swear not and break thine oath; but if thou have,
Thou shalt not ask for this mine errand done
The thing I will not give thee. At Dunbar
Bring but this letter to my husband's hand;
Spare for no speed; if it were possible,
I would it might be with him ere day dawn
On me condemned of men. I have no hope,
Thou seest, but in thee only; thou art young
And mean of place, but be thou good to me
And thou shalt sit above thy masters born
And nobles grey in honour. Wilt thou go?
Have here mine only jewel, and my faith
That I plight to thee, when my hand may choose,
To give thee better gifts. Haste, and so thrive
As I by thee shall.

[*Exit Attendant.*

Though thou play me false,
Thou dost no more than God has done with me
And all men else before thee: yet I could not
But write this worthless one word of my love

Though I should die for writing it in vain,
And he should never read it.

Enter MAITLAND.

Come you not
To tell me of my commons and your friends
That by their will despite you I must die?
It were no stranger now than all things are
That fall as on me dreaming.

Maitland. Madam, no;
I come to plead with you for your own life,
Which wrath and violent mood would cast away.

Queen. What is my life to any man or me
As ye have made it? If ye seek not that,
Why have ye torn me from my husband's hand,
With whom ye know that I would live and die
With all content that may be in the world?

Maitland. For your own honour have we sundered you;
You know not him, who late writ word—myself
Can show this letter—to the Lady Jane,
She was his wife and you his concubine,
No more but sport and scandal in his sheets,
And loved for use but as a paramour
And for his ends to rise and by your lips
Be kissed into a kingdom; and each week
Since they were first but as in show divorced
And but of craft divided, on some days
Have they held secret commerce to your shame
As wedded man and wife.

Queen. There is one thing
That I would ask of even such friends as you—
To turn me with my lord adrift at sea
And make us quit of all men.
Maitland. For yourself,
You drive on no less danger here of wreck,
Seeing for your life if England take no care
France will nor strike nor speak ; and had you not
In your own kindly kingdom yet some friends
Whose hearts are better toward you, these wot well
You had none left you helpful in the world.
Yet what we may will I and all these do
To serve you in this strait ; so for this night
Let not your peril, which can breed not fear,
For that breed anger in you ; and farewell. [*Exit.*
Queen. None but such friends? O yet my living lord,
O still my comfort, hadst thou none but me
As I save thee have no man, we would go
Hand fast in hand to dreadless death, and see
With such clear eyes as once our marriage-bed
Fire, or the sword's light lifted to make end
Of that one life on both our lips that laughed
To think he could not sunder them who smote,
Nor change our hearts who chilled them ; we would kiss,
Laugh, and lie down, and sleep ; but here in bonds
I will not tamely like a dumb thing die
That gives its blood and speaks not. If I find
No faith in all this people, yet my curse

Shall through this casement cry in all their ears
That are made hard against me.—Ho there, you,
All that pass by, your queen am I that call,
Have I no friend of all you to turn back
The swords that point on this bare breast, the hands
That grasp and hale me by the hair to death,
By this discrowned rent hair that wore too soon
The kingdom's weight of all this land in gold?
Have I no friend? no friend?

Voice without. Ay, here was one;
Know you yet him? Raise up the banner there,
That she may look upon her lord, and take
Comfort.

A Woman. What, was not this that kneels the child
Which hung once at that harlot's breast now bare
And should have drunk death from its deadly milk?
Hide it for shame; bind up the wanton hair,
Cover the poisonous bosom; here is none
To kiss the print of that adulterer's head
Which last lay on it.

Another voice. Whither is he flown,
Whose amorous lips were bloody, and left red
The shameless cheek they fed on as with shame?
Where is your swordsman at your back to guard
And make your sin strut kinglike? where his hand
That made this dead man's child kneel fatherless
And plead with God against you for his blood?
Where is your king-killer?

Queen. The day shall be
That I will make this town a fire, and slake

The flame with blood of all you: there shall stand
No mark of man, no stone of these its walls,
To witness what my wrath made ruin of
That turned it first to smoke, and then put out
With all your blood its ashes.

Enter PROVOST.

Hear you, sir,
How we are handled of our townsfolk there,
Being yet in ward of you? but by my head,
If now by force it fall not, you as these
Shall buy this of me bloodily, and first
Shall bleed of all whose lives will pay not me.

Provost. Madam, as you desire to see that day,
Contain yourself; this flame whereon you blow
Will fasten else untimely on your hand
And leave it harmless toward us. I beseech you,
Though but for hate of us and hope to hurt,
Eat, and take rest.

Queen. I will not; what are ye
That I should care for hate of you to live
Who care not for the love's sake of my life?
If I shall die here in your hateful hands,
In God's I put my cause, as into them
I yield the spirit that dares all enemies yet
By force to take it from me. Die or live
I needs must at their bidding; but to sleep,
Eat, drink, weep, laugh, speak or keep silence, these
They shall not yet command me till I die. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII.—THE HIGH STREET.

A crowd of CITIZENS.

First Citizen. Who says she shall not die?
Second Citizen. Even he that stands
First in this city, Morton; by his doom,
Death shall not pass upon her.
First Citizen. Will he say it?
Yet is this man not all the tongue or hand
That Scotland has to speak or smite with.
Third Citizen. Nay,
When he so spake against their honest voice
Who called for judgment, one arose that said—
I know not who, but one that spake for God—
That he who came between God's sword and her
Should as a stayer of justice by the sword
Be stricken of God's justice.
First Citizen. What said he?
Third Citizen. No word, but frowned; and in his eye and cheek
There sprang a fire and sank again, as 'twere
For scorn that anger should have leave to speak,
Though silently; but Maitland writhed his lip
And let his teeth grin doglike, and between
There shot some snarling word that mocked at God,
And at the servants of his wrath, who wait
To see his will done on her, and men's hands
Made ministers to set it forth so broad
That none might pass and read not.

Second Citizen. Why, by this
Part hangs of it already in men's sight;
I have word here from Dunbar of one that was
An officer of Bothwell's, and alive
Laird of Blackadder, whom they seized at sea
Flying from death to deathward, and brought back
To be nigh rent in pieces of their hands
Who haled him through the streets to hang, and left
Not half a man unbroken or unbruised
To feel the grip o' the gallows.

First Citizen. They did well;
Shall we do worse, that have within our hand
The heart and head of all this evil, her
By whom all guilt looks guiltless till she die
A whore's death or a murderer's, burn or drown,
And leave more free the common doom of man
To pass on lesser sins? While she doth live,
How should it speak for shame to bid men die
For what sin done soever, who might say
She lives and laughs yet in God's face and eye
And finds on earth no judgment as do these
Whose bloodiest hands are whiter than her soul?
Let her die first.

Third Citizen. Ay shall she, if God put
Upon those lips that never lacked it yet
His fire to burn men's hearts, and make that tongue
His sword that hath been ever. Yesternight
Came Knox to Edinburgh, and here should speak
By this among us of the doom to fall
On us or her, that if it bruise her not

Must glance aside against us.

Second Citizen. He is here.

Draw nigh, but make no noise.

Enter JOHN KNOX.

First Citizen. Nay, all the press
Heaves round about him silent.

Others. Sirs, give place;
Make way for Master Knox to stand and speak
Here in your midst; here is it higher; give way.
Make room to hear him. Peace there, and stand still.

John Knox. What word is this that ye require of man?
Ye that would hear me, what speech heard of mine
Should lift your hearts up if they sit not high,
If they lack life, should quicken? for this day
Ye know not less than I know that the Lord
Hath given his enemy to you for a prey,
His judgment for a fire; what need have ye,
Or he what need of other tongues to speak
Than this which burns all ears that hear on earth
The blast of this day's justice blown in heaven—
As where is he that hears not? In your hand
Lies now the doom of God to deal, and she
Before your face to abide it, in whose mouth
His name was as a hissing; and had I
The tongues in mine of angels, and their might,
What other word or mightier should I seek
Than this to move you? or should ye wax cold
What fuel should I find out to kindle you?

God ye hear not, how shall ye hear me?
Or if your eyes be sealed to know not her,
If she be fit to live or no, can I
With words unseal them? None so young of you
But hath long life enough to understand
And reason to record what he hath seen
Of hers and of God's dealings mutually
Since she came in. Then was her spirit made soft,
Her words as oil, and with her amorous face
She caught men's eyes to turn them where she would,
And with the strong sound of her name of queen
Made their necks bend; that even of God's own men
There were that bade refuse her not her will,
Deny not her, fair woman and great queen,
Her natural freedom born, to give God praise
What way she would, and pray what prayers; though these
Be as they were, to God abominable
And venomous to men's souls. So came there back
The cursed thing cast forth of us, and so
Out of her fair face and imperious eyes
Lightened the light whereby men walk in hell.
And I that sole stood out and bade not let
The lightning of this curse come down on us
And fly with feet as fire on all winds blown
To burn men's eyes out that beheld God's face,
That being long blind but now gat sight, and saw
And praised him seeing—I that then spake and said,
Ten thousand men here landed of our foes
Were not so fearful to me on her side

As one mass said in Scotland—that withstood
The man to his face I loved, her father's son,
Then mastered by the pity of her, and made
Through that good mind not good—who then but I
Was taxed of wrongful will, and for hard heart
Miscalled of men? And now, sirs, if her prayer
Were just and reasonable, and unjust I
That bade shut ears against it—if the mass
Hath brought forth innocent fruit, and in this land
Wherein she came to stablish it again
Hath stablished peace with honour—if in her
It hath been found no seed of shame, and she
That loved and served it seem now in men's sight
No hateful thing nor fearful—if she stand
Such a queen proven as should prove honourable
The rule of women, and in her that thing
Be shown forth good that was called evil of me,
Blest and not curst—then have I sinned, and they
That would have crossed me would have crossed not God:
Whereof now judge ye. Hath she brought with her
Peace, or a sword? and since her incoming
Hath the land sat in quiet, and the men
Seen rest but for one year? or came not in
Behind her feet, right at her back, and shone
Above her crowned head as a fierier crown,
Death, and about her as a raiment wrapt
Ruin? and where her foot was ever turned
Or her right hand was pointed, hath there fallen
No fire, no cry burst forth of war, no sound

As of a blast blown of an host of men
For summons of destruction? Hath God shown
For sign she had found grace in his sight, and we
For her sake favour, while she hath reigned on us,
One hour of good, one week of rest, one day?
Or hath he sent not for an opposite sign
Dissensions, wars, rumours of wars, and change,
Flight and return of men, terror with power,
Triumph with trembling? Hath one foot stood fast,
One head not bowed, one face not veiled itself,
One hand not hidden? Was this once or twice
That ye beheld, this brief while of her reign,
Strong men one day make mouths at God, the next
Lie where his foes lie fallen? or since she came
Have ye seen raised up of them and cast down
But one or two that served her? Which of these,
Which of them all that looked on her and loved,
And men spake well of them, and pride and hope
Were as their servants—which of all them now
Shall men speak well of? How fared he the first
Hailed of his own friends and elect her lord,
Who gave her kinsmen heart and godless hope
By him to reign in her and wield this land,
Yet once with me took counsel and sought grace,
And suddenly God left him, and he stood
Brain-smitten, with no bride-bed now nor throne
To conquer, but go senseless to his grave,
The broken-witted Hamilton—what end,
Think ye, had this man, or what hope and hap
The next whose name met on men's lips with hers

And ballads mourned him in his love's sight slain,
Gordon, that in the dawn of her dark day
Rose northward as a young star fiery red,
Flashed in her face, and fell, for her own breath
Quenched him? What good thing gat they for her sake,
These that desired her, yet were mighty lords,
Great in account of great men? So they twain
Perished; and on men meaner far than these
When this queen looked, how fared they? folk that came
With wiles and songs and sins from oversea,
With harping hands and dancing feet, and made
Music and change of praises in her ear—
White rose out of the south, star out of France,
Light of men's eyes and love! yea, verily,
Red rose out of the pit, star out of hell,
Fire of men's eyes and burning! for the first
Was caught as in a chamber snare and fell
Smiling, and died with *Farewell, the most fair*
And the most cruel princess in the world—
With suchlike psalms go suchlike souls to God
Naked—and in his blood she washed her feet
Who sat and saw men spill it; and this reward
Had this man of his dancing. For the next,
On him ye know what hand was last year laid,
David, the close tongue of the Pope, the hand
That held the key of subtle and secret craft
As of his viol, and tuned all strings of state
With cunning finger; not the foot o' the king
Before God's ark when Michal mocked at him

Danced higher than this man's heart for confidence
To bring from Babylon that ark again
Which he that touches, he shall surely die,
But not the death of Uzzah; for thereon
God's glory rests not, but the shadow of death,
And dead men's bones within it: yet his trust
Was to lift up again and to relume
The tabernacle of Moloch, and the star
Of Remphan, figures which our fathers made,
That such as he might go before, and play
On timbrels and on psalteries and on harps,
On cornets and on cymbals; and the Lord
Brake him; and she being wroth at God took thought
How they that saw might call his place of death
The breach of David, and her heart waxed hot
Till she should make a breach upon his foes
As God on him, and with a dire new name
And a new memory quite put out that name
And memory of his slaying; yea, all this land,
That hath seen evil of many men before
And sins of many years, hath seen till now
No sin as hers, nor on her forefathers
Whose hands were red and their hearts hard hath seen
The note of such an evil as in her heart
Became a fire conceiving, and brought forth
The deed that in her hand was as a sword
New tempered in that fire; for no such deed
Was this as all theirs who play false or slay,
Take gifts for whoredom or lay snares to kill,
But she gave gifts to hire her lover's knife

That it might pierce her husband; even this land,
This earth whereof our living limbs are made,
This land renewed of God, this earth redeemed,
With all souls born therein to worship him
That call it mother, was the hire she gave
To fee the adulterer's hand when it should rise
Against her lord to slay him; yea, all of you,
And each part of this kingdom, and each man
That but draws breath within her range of reign,
Were parcel of this hire, as counted coins
To make the sum up of her goodly gift.
And he that of their hands was bought and sold,
Her wedded husband, that had bowed his head
Before her worshipped idol—think ye not
That by her hand God gave him all his wage
Who was a less thing in his eyes than she
And viler than her service? for the fire
Fell not from heaven that smote him, yet not less
Was kindled of God's wrath than of man's hate
And in a woman's craft his will put forth
To make her sin his judgment; but of these,
The slain and slayer, the spoiler and the spoiled,
That each have lain down by her wedded side,
Which will ye say hath slept within her bed
A sleep more cursed, and from more evil dreams
Found a worse waking? he that with a blast
Which rent the loud night as a cry from hell
Was blown forth darkling from her sheets, or he
That shared and soiled them till this day whereon
God casts him out upon the track of Cain

To flee for ever with uncleansed red hands
And seek and find not where in the waste world
To hide the wicked writing on his brow
Till God rain death upon him? for his foot,
Be sure, shall find no rest, his eye no sleep,
His head no covert and his heart no hope,
His soul no harbour and his face no light,
But as a hound the wolf that bleeds to death
God's wrath shall hunt him through the dark, and fear
Shall go before him as a cloud by day,
By night a fire, but comfort not his head
By day with shadow, nor with shine by night
Guide lest his foot be dashed against a stone,
But in fair heaven before the morning's face
Make his air thick with thunder, and put out
All lamplike eyes of stars that look on him
Till he lie down blind in the dust and die.
Or if God haply give his lightnings charge
They hurt him not, and bid his wind pass by
And the stroke spare him of the bolted cloud,
Then seeing himself cast out of all that live
But not of death accepted, everywhere
An alien soul and shelterless from God,
He shall go mad with hate of his own soul,
Of God and man and life and death, and live
A loathlier life and deadlier than the worm's
That feeds on death, and when it rots from him
Curse God and die. Such end have these that loved;
And she that was beloved, what end shall she?
What think ye yet would God have done with her,

Who puts her in our hand to smite or spare
That hath done all this wickedness? for these,
What were they but as shadows in the sun
Cast by her passing, or as thoughts that fled
Across her mind of evil, types and signs
Whereby to spell the secret of her soul
Writ by her hand in blood? What power had they,
What sense, what spirit, that was not given of her,
Or what significance or shape of life
Their act or purpose, formless else and void,
Save as her will and present force of her
Gave breath to them and likeness? None of these
Hath done or suffered evil save for her,
Who was the spring of each man's deed or doom
And root for each of death, and in his hand
The sword to die by and the sword to slay.
Shall this be left then naked in the world
For him that will to stab our peace to death?
What blood is this drips from the point, what sign.
What scripture is enamelled on the blade?
Lo, this fair steel forged only to divide
This land from truth and cut her soul in twain,
To cleave the cords in sunder that hold fast
Our hope to heaven and tie our trust to God,
Here by the hilt we hold it, and well know
That if we break not, this now blunted edge
Being newly ground and sharpened of men's hands
That watch if ours will yet loose hold of it
Shall pierce our own hearts through. Ay, be ye sure,
If ye bid murder and adultery live,

They live not stingless ; not a Scot that breathes,
No man of you nor woman, but hath part
In each her several sin and punishment
That ye take off from her. But what are these
That with their oaths or arms would fence her round
And hide her from God's lightnings ? Know they not,
—Or if they know not, will ye too be blind ?—
What end that Lord who hath bowed so many a head,
So many and mighty, of those her former friends,
Hath power to make of these men ? Shall they stand,
Because they have done God service while they would,
And cease to serve him ? or their good deeds past
Who served not God as Job forsooth for nought
Sustain their feet from falling ? Strength nor craft,
Nor praise nor fear nor faith nor love of men,
Shall be for buckler to them, nor his name
A helm of vantage for the Douglas' head
If he make stiff against the yoke of God
Too proud a neck, that for the curb cast off
May feel the weight and edge that iron hath,
To check high minds and chasten ; nor his wit
Nor subtle tongue shall be for Lethington
But as a pointless and unfeathered shaft
Shot heavenward without hurt, that falls again
In the archer's eye to pierce it ; and his lips
That were so large of mockery when God spake,
By present organ of his works and wrath
And tongueless sound of justice audible,
Shall drink the poison of their words again
And their own mocks consume them ; and the mouth

That spat on Christ, now pleading for his foes,
Be stricken dumb as dust. Then shall one say,
Seeing these men also smitten, as ye now
Seeing them that bled before to do her good,
God is not mocked; and ye shall surely know
What men were these and what man he that spake
The things I speak now prophesying, and said
That if ye spare to shed her blood for shame,
For fear or pity of her great name or face,
God shall require of you the innocent blood
Shed for her fair face' sake, and from your hands
Wring the price forth of her bloodguiltiness.
Nay, for ye know it, nor have I need again
To bring it in your mind if God ere now
Have borne me witness; in that dreary day
When men's hearts failed them for pure grief and fear
To see the tyranny that was, and rule
Of this queen's mother, where was no light left
But of the fires wherein his servants died,
I bade those lords that clave in heart to God
And were perplexed with trembling and with tears
Lift up their hearts, and fear not; and they heard
What some now hear no more, the word I spake
Who have been with them, as their own souls know,
In their most extreme danger; Cowper Moor,
Saint Johnston, and the Crags of Edinburgh,
Are recent in my heart; yea, let these know,
That dark and dolorous night wherein all they
With shame and fear were driven forth of this town
Is yet within my mind; and God forbid

That ever I forget it. What, I say,
Was then my exhortation, and what word
Of all God ever promised by my mouth
Is fallen in vain, they live to testify
Of whom not one that then was doomed to death
Is perished in that danger; and their foes,
How many of these hath God before their eyes
Plague-stricken with destruction! lo the thanks
They render him, now to betray his cause
Put in their hands to stablish; even that God's
That kept them all the darkness through to see
Light, and the way that some now see no more,
But are gone after light of the fen's fire
And walk askant in slippery ways; but ye
Know if God's hand have ever when I spake
Writ liar upon me, or with adverse proof
Turned my free speech to shame; for in my lips
He put a word, and knowledge in my heart,
When I was fast bound of his enemies' hands
An oarsman on their galleys, and beheld
From off the sea whereon I sat in chains
The walls wherein I knew that I there bound
Should one day witness of him; and this pledge
Hath God redeemed not? Nay then, in God's name,
If that false word fell unfulfilled of mine,
Heed ye not now nor hear me when I say
That for this woman's sake shall God cut off
The hand that spares her as the hand that shields,
And make their memory who take part with her
As theirs who stood for Baal against the Lord

With Ahab's daughter; for her reign and end
Shall be like Athaliah's, as her birth
Was from the womb of Jezebel, that slew
The prophets, and made foul with blood and fire
The same land's face that now her seed makes foul
With whoredoms and with witchcrafts; yet they say
Peace, where is no peace, while the adulterous blood
Feeds yet with life and sin the murderous heart
That hath brought forth a wonder to the world
And to all time a terror; and this blood
The hands are clean that shed, and they that spare
In God's just sight spotted as foul as Cain's.
If then this guilt shall cleave to you or no,
And to your children's children, for her sake,
Choose ye; for God needs no man that is loth
To serve him, and no word but his own work
To bind and loose their hearts who hear and see
Such things as speak what I lack words to say.

First Citizen. She shall not live.

Second Citizen. If by their mouths to-day
She be set free from death, then by our hands
She dies to-morrow.

Voices in the crowd. Nay, to fire with her!
Fire for the murderess! cast her bones in the lake!
Burn, burn and drown! She shall not live to-night.

SCENE VIII.—A ROOM IN THE PROVOST'S HOUSE.

The QUEEN, ATHOL, *and* MORTON.

Queen. I will not part from hence; here will I see
What man dare do upon me.

Athol. Hear you not
How the cry thickens for your blood? this night
Scarce has time left to save you.

Queen. I will die.

Morton. Madam, your will is no more now the sword
That cuts all knots in sunder: you must live,
And thank the force that would not give you leave
To give your foes the blood they seek to spill.
Here every hour's is as an arrow's flight
Winged for your heart; if in these clamorous walls
You see this darkness by the sun cast out,
You will not see his light go down alive.

Queen. What men are ye then, that have made my life
Safe with your oaths, that walled it round with words,
Fenced it with faith and fortressed it with air
Made of your breaths and honours? When ye swore,
I knew the lie's weight on your lips, and took
My life into mine hand; I had no thought
To live or ride among you but to death,
And whither ye have led me to what end
Nor I nor God knows better than I knew
Then when ye swore me safe; for then as now
I knew your faith was lighter than my life,

And my life's weight a straw's weight in the wind
Of your blown vows. Pledge me your faith to this,
That I shall die to-night if I go forth
And if I stay live safe, and I will go
In trust to live, being here assured to die.

Morton. We swore to save you as you swore again
To cast the traitor from you, and divorce
Your hand for ever from the blood on his;
And with that hand you wrote to him last night
Vows of your love and constant heart till death
As his true wife to serve and cleave to him.
The boy that should have borne your letter lacked
Faith to be trusty to your faithless trust,
And put it in our hand.

Queen. Why, so I thought;
I knew there was no soul between these walls
Of child or man that had more faith than ye
Who stand their noblest; nor shall one soul breathe,
If here ye put not out my present life,
When I come back, that shall not burn on earth
Ere hell take hold of it.

Morton. It is well seen,
Madam, that fear nor danger can pluck forth
Your tongue that strikes men mad with love or scorn,
Taunted or tempted; yet it shall not wrest
Death from men's hands untimely; what was sworn,
That you should live, shall stand; and that it may,
To-night must you part hence; this lord and I
Will bring you through to Holyrood afoot
And be your warders from the multitude

As you pass forth between us; thence to Leith,
And there shall you take water and ere dawn
Touch at Burntisland, whence some twenty miles
Shall bear you to Lochleven and safe guard
On the Fife border; he that has your charge
Is one not trusted more than tried of us,
Sir William Douglas, in whose mother's ward
At Kinross there shall you abide what end
God shall ordain of troubles: at this need
No kindlier guard or trustier could secure
The life we pluck out of the popular mouth
That roars agape to rend it. You must go.

Queen. Must I not too go barefoot? being your queen,
Ye do me too much grace: I should be led
In bonds between you, with my written sins
Pinned to my forehead, and my naked shame
Wrapt in a shameful sheet: so might I pass,
If haply I might pass at all alive
Forth of my people's justice, to salute
With seemly show of penance her chaste eyes
Whom ye have chosen for guard upon her queen
And daughter of the king her paramour,
Whose son being called my brother I must call,
Haply, to win her favour and her son's
And her good word with him as mediatress,
My father's harlot mother. Verily,
Ye are worthy guardians of fair fame, and friends
Fit to have care of reputation, men
That take good heed of honour; and the state

That hath such counsellors to comfort it
Need fear no shame nor stain of such reproach
As makes it shrink when with her lords' good will,
Advised of all tongues near her and approved,
A queen may wed the worthiest born of men
Her subjects, and a warrior take to wife
One that being widowed of his hand and help
Were such a thing as I am. From my lord
I held my kingdom; now my hand lacks his,
What queen am I, and what slaves ye, that throng
And threat my life with vassals, to make vile
Its majesty foregone with abject fear
Of my most abject? yet though I lack might
Save of a woman friendless and in bonds,
My name and place yet lack not, nor the state
And holy magic that God clothes withal
The naked word of king or queen, and keeps
In his own shadow, hallowed in his hand,
Such heads unarmed as mine, that men may smite
But no man can dishallow. In this faith,
Not to your faith I yield myself for fear,
But gladly to that God's who made of me
What ye nor no man mightier shall unmake,
Your queen and mistress. Lead me through my streets
Whose stones are tongues now crying for my blood
To my dead fathers' palace, that hath oped
On many kings and traitors; it may be
I shall not see these walls and gates again
That cast me out; but if alive or dead
I come back ever to require my part

And place among my fathers, on my tomb
Or on my throne shall there stand graved for aye
The living word of this day's work and that
Which is to wreak me on it: and this town
Whence I go naked in mine enemies' hands
Shall be the flame to light men's eyes that read
What was endured and what revenged of me.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V

THE QUEEN.

TIME: FROM JULY 20, 1567, TO MAY 16, 1568.

ACT V.

Scene I.—Holyrood.

Morton *and* Maitland.

Morton. I know not yet if we did well to lay
No public note of murder on the queen
In this our proclamation that sets forth
But the bare justice of our cause, and right
We had to move against her ; while her act
Stands yet unproven and seen but by surmise,
Though all but they that will not seem to know
May know the form and very life of it,
She hath a sword against us and a stay
In the English hearts and envious hands that wait
To strike at us, and take her name to gild
And edge the weapon of their evil will
Who only are our enemies, and stand
Sole friends of hers on earth ; for France, we see,
Will be no screen nor buckler for her, though
Fire were now lit to burn her body, or steel
Ground sharp to shear her neck : from Catherine's
mouth
Had Murray not assurance, and from him

Have we not word that France will stir no foot
To save or spill her blood? England alone
By her new-lighted envoy sends rebuke
Made soft and mixed with promise and with pledge
Of help and comfort to her against our part
Who by this messenger imperiously
Are taxed and threatened as her traitors; this
Must we now answer with a brow as free
And tongue as keen, seeing how his queen in him
Desires the charge and wardship of our prince
Which we must nowise grant.

Maitland. For fear's sake, no,
Nor for her threats, which rather may pluck on
More present peril, of more fiery foot,
To the queen's life; yet surer might we stand
Having the crown's heir safe and girt about
With foreign guard in a strange land, than here
Rocked in the roar of factions, his frail head
Pillowed on death and danger; which once crushed,
And that thin life cut off, what hand puts forth
To take the crown up by successive right
But theirs that would even now dip violent hand
In the dear heart's blood of their kinswoman,
That it might take this kingdom by the throat
When she were slain? and rather by our mean
Would they procure her slaying than by their own
Make swift the death which they desire for her,
And from our hands with craft would draw it down
By show of friendship to her and threat of arms
That menace us with mockery and false fear

Of her deliverance by their swords, whose light
Being drawn and shining in our eyes should scare
Our hearts with doubt of what might fall if she
Stood by their help rekingdomed, and impel
Even in that fear our hands to spill her blood
That lag too long behind their wish, who wait
Till seeing her slain of us they may rise up
Heirs of her cause and lineage, and reclaim
By right of blood and justice and revenge
The crown that drops from Stuart to Hamilton
With no more let or thwart than a child's life
Whose length should be their pleasure's: and with these
Against our cause will England league herself
If yet the queen live prisoner of our hands
And these her kin draw swords for her; but they,
Though England know not of it, nor have eye
To find their drift, would mix their cause with ours,
If from the queen's head living we should pluck
The royal office, and as next in blood
Instate them regents; who would reign indeed
Rather by death's help if they might, and build
On her child's grave and hers their regency,
Than rule by deputation; yet at need
Will be content by choice or leave of us
To take the delegated kingdom up
And lack but name of king: which being installed
I doubt they think not long to lack, or live
Its patient proxies ever. So the land,
Shaken and sundered, looks from us to these,

From these again to usward, and hears blown
Upon the light breath of the doubtful hour
Rumours of fear which swell men's hearts with wrath
To hear of southern wars and counsels hatched
That think with fright to shrink them up, and bind
Their blood's course fast with threats. Let England know,
Her menace that makes cold no vein of ours
May heat instead the centre and the core
Of this land's pulse with fire, and in that flame
The life we seek not and the crown it wears
Consume together. France will rest our friend
Whether the queen find grace to live in bonds
Or bleed beneath our judgment; he that comes
On errand thence to reconcile with us
Her kin that stand yet on the adverse part
Hath but in charge to do her so much good
As with our leave he may, and break no bond
That holds us firm in friendship; if we will,
She may be held in ward of France, and live
Within the bound there of a convent wall
Till death redeem her; but howe'er he speed
Who hath commission with what power he may
To make of our twain factions one such league
As may stand fast and perfect friend with France,
And in what wise by grace of us he may
To do our prisoner service and entreat
That grace to drop upon her, this main charge
He needs must keep, to hold allied in one
Scotland and France, and let our hand not plight

Fresh faith instead with England; so for us
From France looks forth no danger though she die,
For her no help; and these void English threats,
That bring no force to back them but their own
And find not us unfriended, do but blow
The embers that her life still treads upon
Which being enkindled shall devour it.

Morton. Ay,
And each day leaves them redder from the breath
That through the land flies clamorous for her blood
From lips which boast to bear upon them laid
The live coal burning of the word that God
Gives them to speak against her; the south towns
Are full of tongues that cry on our delay
To purge the land plague-stricken with her life;
He first who never feared the face of man,
John Knox, and Craig his second, fill men's ears
With words as arrows edged and winged to slay;
And all the wide-mouthed commons, and more loud
The women than their men, stretch their shrill throats
With cries for judgment on her: and herself,
As parcel of the faction for her death,
Takes part with them against her friends, and swears
To the English envoy who was charged by stealth
To plead with her for mercy on her life
And privily persuade her, as we find,
To cast out Bothwell from her secret thought,
She would die first ere so divorce her soul
From faith and hope that hangs on him and feeds
Her constant spirit with comfort which sustains

His child alive within her; for she thinks
Haply to move men's hearts even by the plea
That hardens them against her, being believed,
For the false fruit's sake of her fatal womb,
The seed of Bothwell, that with her should burn
Rather than bring forth shame, and in this land
Become a root of wars unborn and fire
Kindled among our children.

Maitland. Nay, this plea
Can be but somewhile to defend her life
And put back judgment; never could she think,
Though love made witless whom the world found wise,
His seed might reign in Scotland.

Morton. We are not
So barren of our natural brood of kings
As to be grafted from so vile a stock
Though he were now cut off who grows yet green
Upon the stem so shaken and pierced through
With cankers now that gnaw the grain away;
Nor if the child whom whatsoe'er he be
We for the kingdom's comfort needs must seem
To take for true-begotten, and receive
As issued of her husband's kingly blood,
Should live not to take up with timely hand
The inheritance whereto we hold him born,
Should the crown therefore by his death derive
To the queen's kin, or hand of Hamilton
Assume the state and sway that slides from his:
His father hath a brother left alive,
The younger son of Lennox, who might put

More hopefully his nephew's title on
Than leave it for the spoil of hungry hands
That would make war upon our present state,
Unseat the rule of stablished things, unmake
The counsel and the creed whereby we stand,
And Scotland with us, firm of foot and free
Against the whole face of the weaponed world:
But this boy's crown shall be a golden ring
To hoop and hold our state and strength in one
And with the seemly name of king make sure
The rent bulk of our labouring commonwealth
And solder its flawed sides; his right of reign
Is half our gift who reign in him, and half
His heritage of blood, whose lineal name
Shall not by note of usurpation strike
With strangeness or offence the world's wide ear
That hears a Stuart our prince's uncle crowned
In the dead child's succession, and this state
Made safe in him and stable to sustain
What chance abroad may range or breed at home
Of force to shake it.

Maitland. While the child lives yet,
A nearer hope than of his father's kin
Looks fairer on us; yet in that life's wreck
This rope might hold at need.

Morton. Ay, or we fall,
Who stand against the house of Hamilton
In this man's name; his kinsman Ruthven, Mar,
Myself and Athol, who sustain his cause
Against their part alone.

Maitland. So do you well;
Yet had I rather on the queen's appeal,
In her dead father's and her young child's name
Pleading for life, with proffer to resign
Her kingdom to the council's hands or his
Whom it may mark for regent, she might live
Even yet our titular queen, and in her name
The council govern of our trustiest heads,
While in safe ward of England or of France
Far from his kindred might her son grow safe,
And under strange and kindlier suns his strength
Wax ripe to bear a kingdom; to this end
Save Bothwell's life I see no present let,
Who lives her shame and danger, but being slain
Takes off from her the peril of men's tongues
And her more perilous love that while he lives
It seems will never slacken till her life
Be made a prey for his, but in his death
Dies, or lives stingless after; wherefore most
It now imports us to lay hand on him
And on that capture to proclaim divorce
Between them ere he die, as presently
His death should seal it and his blood subscribe.
So might she live and bring against our cause
No blame of men or danger.

Morton. In my mind
Better it were to crown her son for king
And send her for safe keeping hence in guard
To live in England prisoner while we stand
As safe from her as blameless of her blood

Who reigning but in name on us should reign
Indeed on all our enemies' hopes, and turn
From us the hopeless hearts of half our friends
For the bare name's sake of her seeming reign
And mask of false-faced empire.

Maitland. As I think,
The main mind of the council will not bend
To any reason on our parts proposed
For her removal hence or titular reign,
Nor with the breath of our advice be blown
Beside their purpose; if the queen consent
That her son's head be hallowed with her crown
And hers be bare before him, she shall live,
And that close record of her secret hand,
The proofs and scriptures in her casket locked
That seal her part in Darnley's bloodshedding,
Shall yet lie dumb in darkness; else, I dread,
She shall be tried by witness in them writ
And each word there be clamorous on men's tongues
As the doom uttered of her present death.
And not more instant should her judgment be
Than her swift execution; for they think,
I know, to find no safety while she lives;
So that in no case shall she pass alive
Out of this realm while power is in their lips
To speed or stay her.

Morton. They shall never think
To set before all eyes the whole tale forth
In popular proof and naked evidence
To plead against her; Balfour, that betrayed

Her counsels to us, should then have done more scathe
Than ever he did service; they must know
It were not possible to let this proof
Stand in the sun's sight, and such names be read
For partners of her deed and not her doom
As Huntley's and Argyle's. Have they not heard
What should suffice to show if there be cause
To seal some part yet of this secret up,
How dearly Bothwell held those privy scrolls
Preserved as witness to confound at need
The main part of his judges, and abash
Their sentence with their clear complicity
In the crime sentenced? yea, so dear a price
He set on these, that flying for life he sends
Dalgleish his trustiest servant from Dunbar
To bring again from Balfour's hands to his
The enamelled casket in whose silver hold
Lay the queen's letters and the bond subscribed
Which at Craigmillar writ a live man dead.
This was a smooth and seasonable hour
For one of so soft spirit and tender heart
To send and seek for love of good days gone
A love-gift that his lady brought from France
To hold sweet scents or jewels; and the man
That to his envoy so delivered it
And sent our council warning to waylay
And where to intercept it, this was one
Meet for such trust and amorous offices,
Balfour, that yielding us the castle up
Yields likewise for a sword into our hands

To take by stroke of justice the queen's life
His witness with what words she tempted him
From her own lips, how lovingly and long,
To kill her husband; yet he durst not; then
How at her bidding he might well take heart,
She said, to do it; yet he stood fearful off;
Whereat she brake into a glimmering wrath
That called him coward and bade him live assured
If his tongue ever let this counsel forth
By her sure mean and suddenly to die.

Maitland. This were a sword to drink her life indeed
But that my hope is better of the lords
Than that their heart is fixed upon her death;
And for the commons and their fiery tongue,
The loud-lipped pilot of their windy will,
This famine of their anger shall feed full
And slake its present need but with the spoil
Made of the piteous remnants of her faith
By the stout hand here of their friend Glencairn,
Who from this chapel of her palace rends
All holy ornament, grinds down with steel
The images whereon Christ dies in gold,
Unsanctifies her sovereign sanctuary,
Unmoulds her God and mints and marks him new,
And makes his molten chalices run down
Into strange shape and service; this should ease,
Meseems, the hunger of the hate they bear
That creed for which they held her first in hate;
And for the secular justice to be done

For his death's sake whom all these loathed alive,
It should content them that the trial has past
On those we held in hand, and by this test
The man whose marriage masque on that loud night
Was pretext for the queen to lie apart
From the near danger of her husband's bed,
Sebastian, stands approved as innocent
And no part of her purpose; while the twain
Who bore the charge that was to load with death
The secret house, and to their master's hands
Consigned the mean of murder, have endured
The perfect proof of torture, and confessed
In the extreme pang of evidence enforced
The utmost of their knowledge.

Morton. These may serve
To allay men's instant angers; but much more
His face should profit us whom France detains
With suit and proffer from the queen-mother
With all their force and flower of war or craft
To help him to the crown of his own land
Or throne at least of regency therein,
If he will take but France for constant friend
And turn our hearts with his from England: this
Would Catherine give him for his friendship's sake
Who gives her none for all this, but his hope
Cleaves yet to England, though for fraud or fear
Again it fail him; so being foiled and wroth,
He hath, she tells him, a right English heart,
And in that faith withholds him craftily
From his desired departure and return,

Which should be more of all this land desired
Than of himself; this Elphinstone that comes
For him from Paris, in his master's name
To plead as in her brother's for the queen,
Bears but the name of Murray in his mouth,
Whose present eye and tongue, whose spirit and mind,
Our need of him requires. When their intent
Shall by the lords in council be made known
To him that stands here for Elizabeth,
How in her name will he receive the word
That but from Murray's lip she thinks to hear,
And then determine with what large response
For peace or war she may resolve herself?

Maitland. If she shall find our council one in will
To shed by doom of judgment the queen's blood,
Even by Throgmorton's mouth I am certified
That she will call on France to strike with her
For this their sister's sake, and join in one
Their common war to tread our treason down;
Or if she find not aid of France, from Spain
Will she seek help to hold our French allies
With curb and snaffle fast of Spanish steel,
For fear their powers against her lend us might
That would not lend against us; she meantime,
While Philip's hand hath France as by the hair,
Shall loosen on us England, to redeem
That forfeit life which till the day of fight
Her trust is but in Murray to preserve,
Seeing he spake never word in English ear

Against this queen his sister.

Morton. Being returned,
He shall bear witness if his heart be bent
Rather to this queen's love or that queen's fear
Than to the sole weal of his natural land
That hath more need he should take thought for her
Than one of these or the other. If the lords
Be purposed, as I guess, to bid the queen
Ere this month end make choice of death or life,
To live uncrowned and call her young son king
Or die by doom attainted, none but he
By her submission or her death must rise
Regent of Scotland; and each hour that flits
With louder tongue requires him, and rebukes
His tardiness of spirit or foot to flee
By swift and private passage forth of France
To where our hearts wait that have need of him.

SCENE II.—LOCHLEVEN CASTLE.

The QUEEN *and* MARY BEATON.

Queen. I would I knew before this day be dead
If I must live or die. Why art thou pale?
It seems thou art not sad though I sit here
And thou divide my prison; for I see
Thine eye more kindled and thy lip more calm
And hear thy voice more steadfast than it was
When we were free of body; then the soul
Seemed to sit heavy in thee, and thy face

Was as a water's wearied with the wind,
Dim eye and fitful lip, whereon thy speech
Would break and die untimely. Do these walls
And that wan wrinkling water at their foot
For my sake please thee? Thou shouldst love me well,
Or hate, I know not whether, if to share
The cup wherein I drink delight the lip
That pledges in it mine.

Mary Beaton. If I be pale,
For fear it is not nor for discontent
Here to sit bounded; I could well be pleased
To shoot my thoughts no further than this wall
That is my body's limit, and to lead
My whole life's length as quiet as we sit
Till death fulfilled all quiet, did I know
There were no wars without nor days for you
Of change and many a turbulent chance to be
Whence I must not live absent.

Queen. Hast thou part,
Think'st thou, as in time past, predestinate
In all my days and chances?

Mary Beaton. Yea, I know it.

Queen. If thou have grace to prophesy, perchance
Canst thou tell too how I shall fare forth hence,
If quick or dead? I had rather so much know
Than if thou love or hate me.

Mary Beaton. Truly then
My mind forecasts with no great questioning
You shall pass forth alive.

Queen. What, to my death?

Mary Beaton. To life and death that comes of life
at last;
I know not when it shall.
Queen. I would be sure
If our good guardian know no more than thou;
I think she should; yet if she knew I think
I should not long desire to know as much,
But the utmost thing that were of her foreknown
Should in mine eye stand open.
Mary Beaton. She is kind.
Queen. I would she were a man that had such heart;
So might it do me service.
Mary Beaton. So it may.
Queen. How? in her son? Ay, haply, could I bring
Mine own heart down to feed their hearts with hope,
They might grow great enough to do me good.
I tell thee yet, I thought indeed to die
When I came hither. 'Tis but five weeks gone—
Five, and two days; I keep the count of days
Here; I can mind the smell of the moist air
As we took land, and when we got to horse
I thought I never haply might ride more,
Nor hear a hoof's beat on the glad green ground,
Nor feel the free steed stretch him to the way
Nor his flank bound to bear me: then meseemed
Men could not make me live in prison long;
It were unlike my being, out of my doom;
Free should I live, or die. Then came these walls
And this blind water shuddering at the sun
That rose ere we had ten miles ridden; and here

The black boat rocked that took my feet off shore,
And set them in this prison ; and as I came
The honey-heavy heather touched my sense
Wellnigh to weeping ; I did think to die
And smell nought sweeter than the naked grave.
Yet sit we not among the worms and roots,
But can see this much—from the round tower here
The square walls of the main tower opposite
And the bare court between ; a gracious sight.
Yet did they not so well to let me live,
If they love life too ; I will find those friends
That found these walls and fears to fence me with
A narrower lodging than this seven feet's space
That yet I move in, where nor lip nor limb
Shall breathe or move for ever.

Mary Beaton. Do you think
You shall not long live bound?

Queen. Impossible.
I would have violent death, or life at large ;
And either speedy. Were it in their mind
To slay me here and swiftly, as I thought,
Thou wouldst not here sit by their leave with me ;
They get not so much grace who are now to die
And could not need it ; yet I have heard it said
The headsman grants what sort of grace he may—
A grievous grace—to one about to bleed
That asks some boon before his neck lie down ;
Thy face was haply such a boon to me,
Being cradle-fellows and fast-hearted friends,
To see before I died, and this the gift

Given of my headsmen's grace ; what think'st thou ?
Mary Beaton. Nay,
That I know nought of headsmen.
Queen. Thou hast seen—
It is a sharp strange thing to see men die.
I have prayed these men for life, thou knowest, have sent
Prayers in my son's and my dead father's name,
Their kings that were and shall be, and men say
One was well loved of the people, and their love
Is good to have, a goodly stay—and yet
I do not greatly think I fear to die.
I would not put off life yet ; if I live,
For one thing most shall these men pay me dear,
That I was ever touched with fear of death.
Thou hast heard how seeing a child on the island once
Strayed over from the shore, I cried to him
Through the pierced wall between five feet of stone
To bid my friends pray God but for my soul,
My body was worth little ; and they thought
I was cast down with bitter dread of heart ;
Please God, for that will I get good revenge.
I dream no more each night now on my lord,
And yet God knows how utterly I know
I would be hewn in pieces—yea, I think—
Or turned with fire to ashes for his sake :
Surely I would.

Enter LADY LOCHLEVEN.

Lady Lochleven. Good morrow to your grace.
Queen. Good madam, if the day be good or no

Our grace can tell not; while our grace had yet
The grace to walk an hour in the sun's eye
With your fair daughters and our bedfellows
About your battlements that hold us fast,
Or breathe outside the gateway where our foot
Might feel the terrace under, we might say
The morn was good or ill; being here shut up,
We make no guesses of the sun, but think
To find no more good morrows.

Lady Lochleven. Let your grace
Chide not in thought with me; for this restraint,
That since your late scarce intercepted flight
Has been imposed upon me, from my heart
I think you think that I desired it not.

Queen. Ay, we were fools, we Maries twain, and thought
To be into the summer back again
And see the broom blow in the golden world,
The gentle broom on hill. For all men's talk
And all things come and gone yet, yet I find
I am not tired of that I see not here,
The sun, and the large air, and the sweet earth,
And the hours that hum like fire-flies on the hills
As they burn out and die, and the bowed heaven,
And the small clouds that swim and swoon i' the sun,
And the small flowers. Now should I keep these things
But as sweet matter for my thoughts in French,
To set them in a sonnet; here at home
I read too plain in our own tongue my doom,
To see them not, and love them. Pardon me;

I would have none weep for me but my foes,
And then not tears. Be not more discontent
Than I to think that you could deem of me
As of one thankless; who were thankless found,
Not knowing that by no will or work of yours
I sit suppressed thus from the sun; 'tis mine,
My fault that smites me; and my masters' will,
Not mine or yours it is, that for my fault
Devised this penance; which on me wrought out
May fall again on them.

Lady Lochleven. Madam, alas,
I came on no such errand to your grace
As lacked more words to make it sad than those
It was to speak; and these have I put back
Too long and idly. Here are now at gate
Three messengers sent from the parliament
To speak with you.

Queen. With us to speak? you know,
Nor chamberlain nor herald have we here
To marshal men before us. Let them come,
Whom all our kingdom left could keep not out
From this high presence-chamber. Stay; I would not
Be stricken unaware, nor find in you
That which I thought not; it were out of kind,
Unwomanlike, to give me to their hands
Who came to slay me, knowing not why they came;
Is it for that?

Lady Lochleven. God's grace forbid it! nay——

Queen. I ask if they bring warrant for my death?
I have seen such things and heard, since leaves
bloomed last,

That this were no such marvellous thing to hear.
But if this be, before I speak with them,
I will know first.

Lady Lochleven. Let not your highness dread——

Queen. I do not bid you put me out of dread.
Have you not heard, and hear? The queen desires
To know of her born subject till she die
And keeper of her prison, if these men
Be come to slay her.

Lady Lochleven. They come to bid your grace——

Queen. Bid my grace do their bidding? that is like:
That I should do it were unlike. I must live,
I see, this some while yet. What men are these?

Lady Lochleven. The first, Sir Robert Melville; then the lords
Ruthven and Lindsay.

Queen. Bid my first friend in,
While one friend may be bidden; he, I think,
Can come but friendlike. [*Exit* LADY LOCHLEVEN.
What should these desire?
One head of theirs I swore last month to have,
That then beheld me, some day, if that hand
Whereon I swore should take not first my life.
And one the son of him that being nigh dead
Rose from his grave's edge to pluck down alive
A murdered man before him—what should he
Bring less than murder, being his father's son,
In such a hand as his that stabbed my friend?

Mary Beaton. Perchance they come to take your crown, not life.

Queen. What, my name too? but till I yield it them,
They have but half the royal thing they hold,
The state they ravish; and they shall not have
My name but with my life; while that sits fast,
As in my will it sits, I am queen, and they
My servants yet that fear to take my life;
For so thou seest they fear; and I did ill,
That in first sight of present-seeming death
Made offer to resign into their hands
What here is mine of empire: I shall live,
And being no queen I live not.

Enter SIR ROBERT MELVILLE.

Welcome, sir;
I have found since ever times grew strange with me
Good friends of your good brother and yourself,
And think to find. What errand have you here?

Sir R. Melville. Let not your majesty cast off the thought
Which calls me friend, though I be first to bear
An evil errand. 'Tis the council's mind
That you shall live, and in their hand the proofs
Shall die that plead against you—

Queen. Is this ill?
I know not well what proof that man could show
Would prove men honest that make war on faith,
Show treason trusty, bleach rebellion white,
Bid liars look loyal; and much less I know
What proof might speak against me from their lips
Whose breath may kill and quicken evidence,

Or what good change of mind rebuke the lie
That lived upon them; but that I must live,
And of their proofs unspotted, sounds not worse
Than if a friend had come to bear me word
That I must die belied.

Sir R. Melville. Upon these terms
Are they content for you to live in ward;
That you yield up as with free hand the crown
And right of kingdom to your son, who straight
At Stirling shall receive it from their hands;
Else shall your grace be put to trial, and bear
The doom ensuing, with what of mortal weight
May hang upon that sentence.

Queen. Sir, methought
This word of doom for shame's sake now was dead
Even in their mouths that first it soiled, and made
Even shamelessness astonished; not again
We thought to hear of judgment, we that are,
While yet we are anything, and yet must be,
The voice which deals, and not the ear which takes,
Judgment. God gave man might to murder me,
Who made me woman, weaker than a man,
But God gave no man right, I think, to judge,
Who made me royal. Come then, I will die;
I did not think to live. Must I die here?

Sir R. Melville. Madam, my errand——

Queen. Ay, sir, is received
Here in my heart; I thank you; but you know
I had no hope before; yet sounds it strange
That should not sound, to die at such men's hands,
A queen, and at my years. Forgive me, sir;

Me it not comforts to discomfort you,
Who are yet my friend—as much as man on earth—
If any, you—that come to bid me die.
Sir R. Melville. Be not cast down so deep : I have an errand
From the English queen, your friend, and here ensheathed
By my sword's secret side, for your fair hand
A letter writ from her ambassador
Praying you subscribe what thing my comrades will,
Since nought whereto your writing was compelled
Can hang hereafter on you as a chain
When but for this bond written you stand free.
Queen. Ay, I know that: how speaks Elizabeth?
Sir R. Melville. She bids you at all times account of her
As a sure friend and helpful; has, I know,
Indeed no mind to fail you.
Queen. This your comfort
Is no small comfort to me; I had rather
Be bounden to her than any prince alive.
Is it her counsel then that I subscribe
My traitors' writing? I will do it. But, sir,
Of those that sit in state in Edinburgh
Which was it chose you for my comforter?
I know my lord of Morton would send none;
It was the secretary?
Sir R. Melville. Madam, the same.
Queen. Did I not well then, think you, when I cast
This body of mine between him and the swords
That would have hewn his body? I did think

He was my friend. Bid now mine enemies in,
And I will sign what sort of shame they will,
And rid them hence.

Enter LINDSAY *and* RUTHVEN.

'Tis five weeks gone, my lord,
[*To* LINDSAY.
Since last we looked on you ; for you, fair sir,
[*To* RUTHVEN.
A year I think and four good months are sped
Since at that father's back whose name you bear
I saw your face dashed red with blood. My lords,
Ye come to treat with us ambassadors
Sent from our subjects ; and we cannot choose,
Being held of them in bonds from whom ye come,
But give you leave to speak.

Lindsay. Thus, briefly, madam.
If you will live to die no death by doom,
This threefold bond of contract that we bring
Requires your hand ; wherein of your free will
First must you yield the crown of Scotland up
To your child's hand ; then by this second deed
The place and name of regent through this realm
To the earl of Murray shall you here assign,
Or, if he list not take this coil in hand,
Then to the council ; last, this deed empowers
The lords of Mar and Morton with myself
To set the crown upon the young king's head.
These shall you sign.

Queen. These I shall sign, or die.

But hear you, sirs ; when hither you brought these,
Burned not your hearts within you by the way
Thinking how she that should subscribe was born
King James's daughter? that this shameful hand,
Fit to sustain nor sword nor staff o' the realm,
Hath the blood in it of those years of kings
That tamed the neck and drove with spurs the sides
Of this beast people that now casts off me?
Ay, this that is to sign, no hand but this
Throbs with their sole inheritance of life
Who held with bit and bridle this bound land
And made it pace beneath them. What are ye
That I should tell you so, whose fathers fought
Beneath my fathers? Where my grandsire fell
And all this land about him, was there none
That bore on Flodden, sirs, such names as yours,
And shamed them not? Heard no men past of lords
That for the king's crown gave their crown of life
For death to harry? Did these grieve or grudge
To be built up into that bloody wall
That could not fence the king? Were no dead found
Of that huge cirque wherein my grandsire lay
But of poor men and commons? Yea, my lords,
I think the sires that bred you had not heart
As men have writ of them, but sent to fight
For them their vassals visored with their crests,
And these did well, and died, and left your sires
That hid their heads for ever and lived long
The name and false name of their deeds and death.
How should their sons else, how should ye, being born,
If born ye be, not bastards, of those lords

Who gat this lying glory to be called
Loyal, and in the reek of a false field
To fall so for my fathers—how, I say,
Dare sons of such come hither, how stand here,
From off the daughter's head of all those kings
To pluck the crown that on my fathers' heads
Ye say they died to save? I will not sign;
No, let some Flodden sword dip in my blood;
Here I sit fast, and die. Good friend that was,
[*To* SIR R. MELVILLE.
Tell my great sister that you saw my hand
Strive and leave off to sign; I had no skill
To shape false letters.

Ruthven. Madam, no man here
But knows by heart the height of your stout words
And strength of speech or sweetness; all this breath
Can blow not back the storm yourself raised up
Whose tempest shakes the kingdom from your hand,
And not men's hate. You have been loved of men;
All faith of heart, all honour possible,
While man might give, men gave you. Now, those deeds
Which none against your will enforced you do
Have set that spirit against you in men's minds
That till you die (as then your memory may)
Nor your fair beauty nor your fiery heart
Can lay with spells asleep.

Sir R. Melville (*aside*). I pray you, madam,
Think on mine errand.

Queen. Wherefore should I sign?
If I be queen that so unqueen myself,

What shall it profit me to give my foes
This one thing mine that hallows me, this name,
This royal shadow? If I be no queen,
Let me bleed here; as being uncrowned I know
That I shall die of all your promises.

Lindsay. We came not, madam, to put force on you,
And save your life by violence; but take note,
[*Laying his hand on her arm.*
As in this hand your own is fast, and hath
No power till mine give back its power again
To strive or sign, so fast are you in ward
For life or death of them that bid you live
And be no queen, or die.

Queen. I thank you, sir,
That of your love and courtesy have set
This knightly sign upon my woman's flesh
For proof if I be queen or no, that bear
Such writing on my body of men's hands
To seal mine abdication. Sirs, read here;
What need I sign again? here may men see
If she be queen of Scotland on whose arm
Are writ such scriptures as I wist not yet
Men's eyes might read on any woman born.
Yet will I write, being free, to assure myself
This is my hand indeed that wears the sign
Which proves it vassal to the stronger. Sirs,
Take back your papers; and albeit, my lord,
The conquest you have made of me henceforth
Lift up your heart with pride, I pray you yet
Boast not yourself on women overmuch,
Lest being their conqueror called and praised for that

Men call you too their tyrant. Once and twice
Have we grasped hands ; the third time they shall cross
Must leave one cold for ever. Nay, I pray,
Who may command not surely, yet I pray,
Speak not, but go ; ye have that ye came for ; go,
And make your vaunt to have found so meek a thing
As would yield all, and thank you.

[*Exeunt* LINDSAY, RUTHVEN, *and* SIR R. MELVILLE.

Hast thou read
Of sick men healed with baths of children's blood ?
I must be healed of this my plague of shame,
This sickness of disgrace they leave with me,
Bathing in theirs my body.

Mary Beaton. In such streams
You have washed your hands already.

Queen. What, in war ?
Ay, there I have seen blood shed for me, and yet
Wept not nor trembled ; if my heart shrink now,
It is for angry pity of myself
That I should look on shame.

Mary Beaton. What shame, my queen ?

Queen. Thy queen? why, this, that I, queen once of Scots,
Am no more now than thine. Call back the lords ;
I will unsign their writing, and here die ;
It were the easier end.

Mary Beaton. It is your will—
Forgive me, madam—on this cause again
To grapple with Lord Lindsay ?

Queen. True, not yet;
Thou thought'st to make me mad, remembering that;
But it hath made me whole. My wits are sound.

Remembering I must live. When I have slept,
Say I would gladly see the kindlier face
Again of our dear hostess with her son
To put those angry eyes out of my sight
That lightened late upon me ; say, being sad,
And (if thou wilt) being frighted, I must find
The comfortable charities of friends
More precious to me. 'Tis but truth, I am fain,
Being tired, to sleep an hour : mine eyes are hot ;
Where tears will come not, fire there breeds instead,
Thou knowest, to burn them through. Let me lie down ;
I will expect their comforts in an hour. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—HOLYROOD.

MAITLAND *and* SIR NICHOLAS THROGMORTON.

Throgmorton. Why would your council give no ear to me
Ere they rode hence so hot to crown their prince ?
Why hear not first one word ?

Maitland. One threat the more
From your queen's lips bequeathed by rote to yours,
Or one more promise ? If we run her course,
This queen will leave us in the briars, we know,
There to lie fast or labour till the thorns
Have rent our flesh and raiment.

Throgmorton. Sir, take thought
If help were sent not at the siege of Leith,
When France had grasped you by the throat, and sea
To land gave battle, from that sovereign's hand
Whom now ye trust not.

Maitland. Ay, for her own ends

She cast the French out and flung back their power
Which here was deadly to her, and of that deed
Had recompense with surety: but what aid
Must we now look for of her, on whose will
Hang all our enemies' hopes? I would I had been
Banished seven years my country, and your queen
On that condition had but as a friend
Dealt freely with us. Let her now proclaim,
Her own seed failing, this our prince her heir,
And England shall no less have care of him
Than we his lineal servants; else, if hence
We yield him to your keeping, men will say
We have given our natural master to be kept
As among wolves a sheep, and made our hope
The fosterling of danger: and small trust
Should we put in her that has newly dealt
By secret message to subvert our state,
We know, with those indeed of our queen's kin
From whose report we know it.

Throgmorton. What have they said?

Maitland. That you brought proffers of her aid and love
To incite their arms, to quicken the slow snake
Whose sting lies cold yet in their policy,
But watched and warmed of her with hand and eye
The perfect poison should put forth, and thrust
At once the hot and cloven tongue of war
Even in our face and bosom; but for fear,
It may be, or being yet at heart's root Scots,—
For this or that cause, through false heart or true,
So is it, that in doubt of your good mind
Toward them or Scotland, in whose breast you sought

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To make the mutual swords of her own sons
Clash as they crossed once more, drinking her blood,
They sent us word of all your embassy.

Throgmorton. But you, whate'er these thought or feigned to think,
Think no such foolish evil as fools may,
Deem not of England as the Scot who deems
She hath no will, no line of life, no hope,
No thought but Scotland's ruin, and our queen
No sense of aught here done—her sister's doom,
The people's rage, the council's purpose—nought
But where to find in these a guileful mean
To strike at Scotland? why, these fears are old,
White-bearded dreams, suspicions long grown grey,
Dangers and doubts toothless and eyeless now
That fright nor babe nor dotard; and your thought
Finds room for such? What profit should she have
To turn your swords against each other's throats
And pick some privy chance of vantage up
That fell between your factions at her feet?
Such chance indeed of vantage might there fall
For your own queen, who nowise has been slow
To nurse the chance and wait on it and serve,
From strifes rekindled and requickening claims
Set each at each in England, whence or craft
Or force might filch or seize for Scotland's sake
Some no less jewel than her eye ere now
Was fixed so fast on, even the crown that hangs
In doubt yet of unsure inheritance,
As hangs not yours for us to pluck at, who,
Reign whoso may when this queen's life is quenched,

In Scotland shall reign never.

Maitland. That I know,
And this no less ; that he who reigns shall reign
Never by right of England's leave or love,
Her ward or servant ; as, this queen removed,
Haply ye hope her lineal heir might be,
And in that hope work with these Hamiltons
To strike at us in Mary's name, and pluck
Death from our hands upon her ; you, your queen,
And they her kinsfolk, all ye seek her death ;
No word but of her freedom in your mouths,
No end than this less looked for in your hearts.
Speak to the council as but now to me,
Defy them in her cause, not all the world
For three days' space shall save her.

Throgmorton. Nay, not we
Desire the queen's death at your hand provoked,
But here from Tullibardine's mouth I know
Her kin at secret heart desire no less,
And will ye but allow their house its right
By heritage to reign, no need, they say,
To take more care for her, who privily
May be put out of life, and no man more
In that dead name be troubled ; and again,
If they with no such promise being assured
Shall not join hands with you, and England then
Shall bring the queen back whom ye spared to slay,
Ye are lost and they not winners. Therefore is it
That of Lord Mar and of yourself I seek
Help for the queen's deliverance, who being dead
Can profit no man but your foes and ours

That love not England more than they love you
Nor you than they love England: shall not both
With their own cause take part?

Maitland. It is too late;
What part should we take with you, to what end,
Since all the council knows your traffic now
With their chief foes, and how being there betrayed
You can but bring us such a friendship back
As they would none of?

Throgmorton. Sir, if yet you fear,
If you suspect yet that our queen desires
To speed the death of yours or make it sure
By pleading for her, or by threat of war
Denounced for her sake, let this letter be
The seal and warrant of our single heart,
Wherein she threatens war—but smile not yet—
If in his mother's name for him discrowned
Ye crown the child that has but wailed one year.
This should the lords have seen; but even for doubt
Lest it should set their spirits on such fire
As but her blood shed presently could slake,
And this be deemed its aim indeed at heart
And privy purpose of her hand who writ,
Your eye alone must read that reads it now
And the lord Murray's; for they know that send
And with it send me this for secret charge,
They know the truth and heat of fiery will
That urges our queen's heart upon this war,
And for no end but for her sake who sits
Held fast in bonds of her own subjects born,

And with her all the majesty on earth
That walks with monarchs, and no king alive
But wears some shameful parcel of her chain.

Maitland. Though this be truth, yet they that hold it false
Will join in wrath with them that hold it true,
Even for the threat's sake and for shame, will join
To write red answer in the slain queen's blood
Back to the queen that threatens. Nay, herself
Who sits in bonds yet of us will not yield
To come forth singly safe, nor give consent
That Bothwell should fare worse than she, or have
More harm or danger; and being thus incensed,
A three-edged weapon in the council's hand
Is drawn to smite at need, a treble charge
Whereon to impeach her; on that statute first
Made of this land's religion seven years since,
Which though she signed not, yet its breach in her
Shall stand for guilt before them; and thereto
Shall she be challenged of incontinence
With more than Bothwell, who by noteless nights
Have made her bed adulterous; and of each
The proof that seals her shame in him, they say,
Lies in their hand; last, of her murdered lord
Their warrant cries against her; and from these
No man may think to quit her nor secure,
Save he that here comes timeliest for such toil
As none beside may take upon his hand.

Enter MURRAY.

Welcome, my lord, and to a land that lacks

As never yet it lacked or looked for you.
What comfort bring you for her wounds from France
Besides that present help of hand and head
We heard returned an hour since?

Murray. Sir, thus much;
All of our faith in France will in our cause
Live or die fighting; gold and men in arms
Will flow thence on us in full stream and free
If Scotland set but open hand or breast
To greet them coming; they will buy our love
At what best price they may.

Throgmorton. But you, my lord,
That have loved England ever, and that know
The worth and unworth weighed of either friend,
French faith or English, will not surely buy
With heavy hate of England the light love
That France and fraud would sell you, nor for this
Cast off the fortune and the peace unborn
That may bind fast in one strong ring of sea
Two jewels become one jewel, one such land
As from the stout fort of a single heart
Fixed like a sea-rock might look forth and laugh
Upon the under wars of all the world,
And see not higher the heads of kingdoms risen
Than of small waves in summer? will you pluck
This hope out of the hopeful hand of time
Ere he can gather, this good fruit that grows
On the green present branch of time's grey tree
To feed the future where the hungry past
Could get but blood for bread, and with bare steel

Died starved and smitten?

Murray. Sir, when I came in
By secret flight from France, out of the guard
Wherein I lived inwalled with watch of men
That the court set about me to withhold
My foot from England—when an English boat
Had borne me oversea by secret night
From privy port to port, at the long last
I saw your queen's face darken on mine own
As on a servant favour-fallen, that came
To take rebuke and speak not; in her speech
I found no note of favour, no good word,
Nor honour such as late in France I found
And finding fled from: sharply with strange eyes
She glanced against me; taxed me with the bonds
Wherein men held my sister; half a threat
Was all her promise: I returned but this,
I would be still a Scotsman, and this land
I had more mind to serve and do her good
Then either of these queens; so parted thence
Unfriendlike, yet with no breach openly
Proclaimed of friendship; and being here, my mind
Is yet to serve no mistress but alone
This earth my bones were bred of, this kind land
Which moulded me and fostered; her strong milk
Put manhood in my blood, and from my heart
If she that nurtured need it now to drink
I think not much to shed it. If those lords
In whom her power now stands shall with one mouth
Bid me put on this weight of regency,

For no man's fear shall I deny them; she,
Your queen that threatens me with ignominy
If I obey their choice and call, must know
That to God only and my heart, those twain
That are one eye to know me and to judge,
Will I refer it; and of them being known
That with pure purpose and no soiled intent
I take this charge up, I will bear it through
To the right end. Yet ere my mind be fixed,
I will behold her that was queen, and see
How sits the spirit within her; but howe'er,
Till Bothwell in our hands lie trapped and dead
She must not pass forth free; and we will hold
No traffic for the bear's skin merchant-like
Before the bear be caught; but if your queen
Proclaim against us therefore war, be sure
We will not lose our lives, yield up our lands,
And bear repute of rebels through the world,
Who might, how loth soe'er, in all men's eyes
Make our cause clear as righteousness; the proofs
Which in our hands lie darkling yet, but bear
The perfect witness of those ill deeds past
That bring her thus in danger of our doom
And righteous peril of all-judging law,
Must to the world's eye nakedly set forth
What cause is hers, and ours; when if I stand
In the king's likeness of the state elect,
To him in me shall all knees bend and hearts
Kneel subjected; for them that hold apart,
No head shall stand of any Hamilton
That shall not bow before my sword or me.

SCENE IV.—LOCHLEVEN CASTLE.

The QUEEN *and* GEORGE DOUGLAS.

Queen. Will he be here to-day? Alas, my friend,
I made my hope of this till he should come,
And now he comes I would not look on him.
I know not what put hope into my fear
That this your mother's and my father's son
Should do me good for evil.

George Douglas. Madam, I think
The mind can be but good that marshals him
To your fair presence; nay, though even his soul
Were damned so deep as to desire your death,
He durst not come to show us his purpose here
Who were not chosen for murderers at his hire
But guards and servants that would shed their lives
Ere yours should look on danger.

Queen. That we know,
And have no better wage than love to give,
Which more to give we grudge not, being so poor,
Than from your queen's hands you disdain to take:
But what knows he? for aught our brother knows,
Your mother and yourself are envious guards
That hate me for my faith as for my fault
And hold your hands but till he bids you slay
Or yield me to my slayers. Ah my last knight,
You shall do well to leave me at my need;
He will command you; when this brother knows
I am not hated, think you then my friend
Shall not be chidden from me?

George Douglas. When my life
Is bidden from my body; not till then
Shall I be found obedient.

Enter LADY LOCHLEVEN.

Queen. Be but wise,
And wisdom shall not let you disobey.
Our noble hostess, you have borne a son,
I dare not say more noble, but I dare
More simple than his elders; one whose heart
Stands fast when fortune stands not, and requires,
As other men do power and glory and gold,
No guerdon but the memory writ of him
To have been most true when fortune was most false,
And most to have loved whom she most hated: this
Shall not of them be written. Come you not
To bring one to me that shall never sin
As he by faith and folly? I would say
Of my great brother and your kingly son
Nothing but good; yet can nor you nor I
Say that he loves me and my fallen estate
More than the power he comes to take from me,
Or rather from their hands that ere he came
Had rent it out of mine. Nay, look not sad;
You should be merrier than my mother might,
Were she now living.

Lady Lochleven. God shall witness me
What joy I have of such a guest, or pride
To be so stricken, madam, of your tongue
Chastising me for triumph; if my heart
Exalt itself for this day's sake, God knows,

Who hears you mock me.

Queen. Nay, I said no scorn;
I had rather need to pray you in his name
Scorn not at me. Let him come in; I know
What ceremony my masters should put on
Were but to mock their servant.

Enter MURRAY, ATHOL, *and* MORTON.

Sirs, you twain
That brought me two months since between you safe
Out of the town by night that sought my blood
Myself bid welcome; but she is not I
That in this presence should make welcome here
My father's son; nor shall my speech usurp
For modesty that office: yet indeed
I am glad, my lord, to see your face, that must
Bring comfort, or an end of all this life
That yet needs comfort.

Murray. What I may, I will;
Yet haply shall you find not in my words
Or death or comfort; as you give them heed,
Shall they prove comfortable or deadly. Sirs,
I have that to speak and hear that but requires
The Lady Mary's ear and mine; I pray you,
Take not offence that I crave leave to say
We must for some space lack your company.

Morton. My lord, the land that puts her trust in you
Bids us obey, well knowing that love nor fear
Shall bend you from her service.

Lady Lochleven. Sir——

Murray. Your will?

Lady Lochleven. I am no parcel of the sovereign state
That gives you of its greatness, nor have right
To speak commandingly; yet ere I go
I would desire you by what name I may,
Look on this lady with such equal eyes
As nor the wrath and hate of violent men,
Nor sense of evil done to this land's peace
By her mischance and evil counsellors,
Nor (what I would not fear to find in you)
Desire of rule with pride of station, may
Divert to do her wrong or glance aside
From the plain roadway of that righteousness
Whose name is also mercy. This at least
Surely by me may be of you required,
That in this house no wrong by word or act,
By deed or threat, may touch her.

Murray. Be assured
No wrong shall ever touch her by my hand;
And be content to know it.

Queen. Madam, these lords
Know that I thought ere this to find of you
A mediatress between me and your son;
I have my hope, and with a humble heart
I take your intercession thankfully.

[*Exeunt all but the* QUEEN *and* MURRAY.

Murray. I would I had another cause to speak
Or you to listen, than this bitter theme
That brings us back together, though for that
I had died a foreign man.

Queen. I thought not, sir,
When we last parted ere the break of spring,
To meet you thus in summer; but these months
Have wrought things stranger on me.
Murray. Say, yourself
Have made of them more strange and perilous use
Than is the fruit they bear. I am not come
To flatter with you; that I seek your death
I think you fear not, yet should surely know
The man that seeks were now more like to speed
Than he that would preserve it. Heaven and earth
As with the tongue of one same law demand
Justice against you; nor can pity breathe
But low and fearful, till the right be weighed
That must in pity's spite and fear's be done,
Or this land never thrive. For that right's sake
And not for hatred or rebellious heart
Do men require that judgment pass on you
And bring forth execution; the broad world
Expects amazedly when we that rule
Shall purge this land of blood, which now looks red
In the world's eye, and blushing not for shame
Blushes with bloodshed; in men's general mouths
The name of Scot is as a man's attaint
Of murderous treason, or as his more vile
That for base heart and fear or hire of gold
With folded hands watches the hands that slay
Grow great in murder; and God's heavy doom
Shall be removed not from us, nor his wrath,
Well may we fear, shall lighten, till the deed

That reeks as recent yet toward the fair heavens
Be thoroughly cleansed with judgment.
Queen. Must I too
Bleed to make Scotland clean of baser blood
Than this she seeks of mine?
Murray. If you shall die,
Bethink you for what cause, and that sole thought
Shall seal your lips up from all pride of plea
That would put in between your deed and doom
The name of queen to cover you. No age
That lived on earth red-handed without law
Ever let pass in peace and unchastised
Such acts as this that yet in all men's ears
Rings as a cry unanswered. When your lord
Lay newly murdered, and all tongues of friends
Were loud in prayer to you to save your name
From stain of accusation, and yield up
That head to judgment which the whole world held
Blood-guilty, first with subtle stretch of time
Did you put back the trial, then devise
To make it fruitless save of mockery; next,
I cannot say for shame what shame foregone
Moved you to put upon this loathing land
That great dishonour to behold and bear
The man your lover for its lord, and you,
Queen of all Scots and thrall of one most base,
While yet the ring was from his finger warm
That sealed it first, and on his wedded hand
The young blood of your husband, ere the print
Had cooled of marriage or of murder, you

In the hot circle of his amorous arms
A new-espoused adulteress. Will you say
You were enforced or by false counsels bent
To take him to your bosom? In what eye
Was not the foregone commerce of your loves
As bare as shame? what ear had heard not blown
His name that was your sword and paramour,
Whose hand in yours was now as steel to slay,
Now as a jewel for love to wear, a pledge
Hot from your lips and from your husband's heart?
Who knew not what should make this man so proud
That none durst speak against him of your friends
But must abide for answer unaware
The peril of the swords that followed him?
Went he not with you where you went, and bade
Men come and go, do this or do not, stand
Or pass as pleased him, ere that day had risen
Which gave the mockery of a ravished bride
To the false violence of his fraudful rape
That hardly she could feign to fear, or hide
The sweetness of the hour when she might yield
That which was his before, and in men's eyes
Make proof of her subjection? Nay, forbear;
Plead not for shame that force was put on you
To bear that burden and embrace that shame
For which your heart was hungry; foe nor friend
Could choose but see it, and that the food desired
Must be but mortal to you. Think on this,
How you came hither crowned these six years gone
In this same summer month, and with what friends

Girt round about and guarded with what hopes,
And to a land how loving; and these years,
These few brief years, have blown from off your boughs
All blossom of that summer, though nor storm
Nor fire from heaven hath wrecked nor wind laid low
That stately tree that shadowed a glad land,
But now being inly gnawn of worms to death
And made a lurking-place for poisonous things
To breed and fester at its rotten root,
The axe is come against it. None save you
Could have done this, to turn all hearts and hands
That were for love's sake laid before your feet
To fire and iron whetted and made hot
To war against you. No man lives that knows
What is your cause, and loathes not; though for craft
Or hope of vantage some that know will seem
To know not, and some eyes be rather blind
Than see what eyeless ignorance in its sleep,
If but it would, must needs take note of; none
Whose mind is maimed not by his own mere will
And made perforce of its own deed perverse
Can read this truth awry. 'What have you done?
Men might weep for you, yea, beholding it
The eyes of angels melt; no tide of tears
Could wash from hand or soul the sinful sign
That now stands leprous there; albeit God knows
Myself for very pity could be glad
By mine own loss to ransom you, and set
Upon your soul again the seal of peace
And in your hand its empire; but your act

Has plucked out of men's hearts that fain would keep
The privilege of mercy ; God alone
Can lose not that for ever, but retains
For all sins done that cry for judgment here
The property of pity, which in man
Were mere compliance and confederacy
With the sin pardoned ; so shall you do best,
Being thus advised, to entertain the hope
Of nothing but God's mercy, and henceforth
Seek that as chiefest refuge ; for in man
There shall no trust deliver you, nor free
Body nor soul from bonds. Weep not for that ;
But let your tears be rather as were hers
That wept upon the feet of God, and bought
With that poor price her pardon.

Queen. So should I,
If grief more great may buy it than any of theirs
That had sinned more than I ; nay, such have been
And have been pardoned. I have done ill, and given
My name for shame to feed on, put mine honour
Into mine enemies' keeping, made my fame
A prey and pasture for the teeth of scorn ;
I dare not say I wist not by what mean
I should be freed of one that marred my life,
Who could by no mean else be quit of him
Save this blind way of blood ; yet men there were
More wise than I, men much less wronged of him,
That led me to it and left me ; but indeed
I cite not them to extenuate by strange aid
Mine own rash mind and unadvisedness

That brought forth fruit of death ; yet must you know
What counsels led me by the hand, and whence
My wrath was fostered ; and how all alone,
How utterly uncomforted, and girt
With how great peril, when the man was slain,
I stood and found not you to counsel me,
And no man else that loved ; and in such need
If I did ill to seek to that strong hand
Which had for me done evil, if evil it were
To avenge me of mine enemy, what did they
That by their hands and voices on his side
Put force on me to wed him? yet I say not
I was indeed enforced ; I will not mock
With one false plea my penitent heart, nor strive
With words to darken counsel, nor incense
By foolishness your wisdom, to provoke
A judgment heavier than I wait for ; nay,
You have not said that bitter thing of me
That I may dare unsay ; what most I would,
I must deny not ; yet I pray you think,
Even as might God, being just, what cause I had,
What plea to lighten my sore load of sin,
Mismated and miscounselled, and had seen
Of my sad life not wholly nineteen years
When I came hither crowned ; as yet would God
Your head, my brother, had endured for mine
That heaviness of honour, and this hand
The weight of Scotland, that being laid in mine
Has fallen and left it maimed, and on my brows
A mark as his whose temples for his crime

Were ringed with molten iron. Take them now,
Though but for pity of me that pray you take,
And bear them better than I did; for me,
Though no plea serve me in the sight of man
Nor grace excuse my fault, I am yet content,
If I may live but so much time in bonds
As may suffice for God to pardon me,
Who shall not long put off to pardon, then
Shut eyes and sleep to death.

Murray. I had thought to-night
To speak no more with you, but let that hope
Which only in God's name I gave you bear
What fruit it might with prayer and watching; yet
Take comfort, and assure yourself of life,
And, if it may be, honour; one of these
I may take on me to redeem, and one
So as I may will I preserve from death
Dealt of men's tongues that murder it; but you,
Keep these things in your heart; that if you raise
Within this realm a faction, or devise
To break these bonds, I shall not keep an hour
This power I have to save you; nor shall keep,
If France or England be by word of yours
Stirred up to strike at our frail peace; nor yet
If you shall cleave to him that should for shame
As from this land be cast out from your heart;
But if toward God your faults be faithfully
In good men's sight acknowledged, and that life
You led with your false lord and all sins past
Loathed and lamented, and in days to be

The living purpose in you manifest
Of a more modest habit and a life
More nobly fashioned—if the slaughter done
On your dead husband seem of you abhorred
And those ill days misliked wherein your fame
Drank mortal poison from his murderer's hand—
If this be seen, and that your mind lives clear
From counsel of revenge upon those lords
Who sought your reformation, nor with hope
Nor dangerous forethought of device to be
Renews itself to do them some day wrong;
Then may you now sit safe, and unreproved
Expect an end of bondage; for at large
You cannot think to live yet, who in time
May haply by repentance be restored
And for your prison somewhile here endured
Find yet your throne again, and sit renewed
More royal than men wist who saw the ship
Put in from France that bore you.

Queen. O my friend,
O brother, found now father to me too,
Who have raised and rebegotten me from death,
By how much less I thank you for my life
Think so much more for honour I give thanks
That you raise up the hope in me to have
Which was nigh dead for shame. O, let me hold
[*Embracing him.*
My comfort in mine arms, and with dumb lips
Kiss you my thanks; I looked for less than this,
But yet for comfort of you. One thing more,

Having so much, will I require, and cease—
Even for my son's sake and mine own to lay
The charge upon you of this regency
Which none might bear so noble, nor bring back
Her peace again to Scotland, as I know
Your hand shall bring; and had I known betimes
I had not started from its curb aside
Nor set against its strength in no good hour
The feebleness of mine: but if your heart
Be large enough to let forgiveness in
Of my wrongs done and days of wanton will,
Take this charge too, to keep for me the forts
Of all that was my kingdom; I would have
Nothing of mine lie now not in your hand;
Keep too my jewels; all I had of worth,
What help without you should I have of it,
What profit or what surety? let your heart
Cast her not out who prays you of your grace
Take these in trust and me.

Murray. I may not these,
But you that put yourself into my trust
I will not fail.

Queen. Nay, you shall keep them too.

Murray. I would not put my hand forth uncompelled
To take for life and death the burden up
That burns as fire and bows the back that bears
As with an iron load; and certainly
He that shall take this kingdom on his hand
I think shall live not long; nor pride nor hope

But very love and strong necessity
Could only bow me down to obey their will
Who should enforce on mine the task to bear
This grievous office, that if Scotland bid
I for her sake must bear till I may die.
But if I be not bidden, for no love
Or fear or lust of kingdom will I seek
The labour and the grief of that great charge
That I may live and feel not.

Queen. By my lips,
That have no royal right to speak for her
Now, think that yet she bids you, seeing none else
To undo mine evil done on her, and heal
The wounds mine enemies and myself have made
In her sweet peace: she hath no stay but you;
Whom other should she seek to? and for me
Again I dare not urge you, but my heart
Is turned into a prayer that pleads with yours
To lend its weakness comfort of your strength
By taking off its fears; these that break mine
Can bow not yours: O, take from me that weight
Which were to you but sport and ornament,
The natural honour of a hand so strong
And spirit elect of all men's souls alive
To do a work imperial.

Murray. If not else,
But by me only may this land find peace,
By me then shall it; for your private charge,
Impute not to me for default of love
That I beseech you lay no more on me

Than public need enforces; in my trust
Your treasures were no safer than they stand
Now that I keep them not, and no man's tongue
Can tax me with them as detained from you
By fraud or usurpation; which mine ear
Were loth to know was muttered.

Queen. But you see
Nor they nor I have surety save in you;
Let it be seen of them that else may doubt
How thankfully I trust you; even for that
Do thus, to do me good in men's report
When they shall see us at one; from mine own hand
Except you take them shall they not be rent
By craft or force of hidden or harrying hands
That could not wrest from yours what mine must yield
For fault of you to help me?

Murray. As you will.
I would not cross you where I might content,
Yet willingly I cannot take on me
More charge than needs of privy trusts to keep
That bring men's blame about them; but in this
My will shall be your servant.

Re-enter LADY LOCHLEVEN *and* GEORGE DOUGLAS.

For this time
I take farewell; be patient, and seek peace
Whence God may send it.—To your gentler hand,
While yet the Lady Mary lives in ward,
Behoves not me commend her, being but bound
As reverently as may beseem your son

In the state's name to charge you that she find
At all men's hands that guard her now about
Good usage with safe keeping ; which to assure
Shall hardly need this young man's service here,
For whom the state has other use, and I
A worthier work than still to keep such watch
As porters use or pages.

Lady Lochleven. He and I
Stand at your bidding ; yet were nowise loth
The state that gave should take this charge away
It laid upon us.

Queen. Sir, the grace you brought
And comfort to me sorrowing and afraid
Go ever with you ; and farewell.

Murray. Farewell.

[*Exeunt* LADY LOCHLEVEN *and* MURRAY.

Queen. Will you not go ?

George Douglas. Whither you bid, and when,
I will go swiftly.

Queen. With your lord and mine,
I would have said ; yet irks it me to say
My lord, who had none under heaven, and was
Of these my lords once lady. Said I not
You should do well to cast off care of me
Whom you must leave indeed now at command
More powerful of more potent lips than mine ?
I would not have you set your younger will
Against his word imperial ; nor, I think,
Doth he fear that who bids us come and go
And whose great pleasure is that you part hence

And I sit here : be patient, and seek peace,
You heard him bid me ; patience we must have
If we would rest obedient ; and for peace,
So haply shall we find it, having learnt
What rest is in submission.

George Douglas. Bid me stay,
And that my will shall part not hence alive
What need I swear?

Queen. Alas, your will may stay,
Your will may wait on me to do me good,
Your loves and wishes serve me when yourself
Shall live far off ; our lord forbids them not ;
It is the service of your present hand,
The comfort of your face, help of your heart,
That he forbids me.

George Douglas. And though God forbade
Save by my death he should compel me not
To do this bidding ; only by your mouth
Of all that rule in heaven and earth will I
Be willingly commanded.

Queen. You must go.
Nay, I knew that ; how should one stay by me?
There was not left me, by God's wrath or man's,
One friend when I came hither in the world ;
And from the waste and wilderness of grief
If one grain ripen—from the stone and sand
If one seed blossom—if my misery find
One spring on earth to assuage its fiery lip—
How should I hope that God or man will spare
To trample or to quench it?

George Douglas. I am here
While you shall bid me live, and only hence
When you shall bid me but depart and die.
Queen. There was a time when I would dream that men
There were to do my bidding; such as loved
And were beloved again, and knew not fear
Nor hope but of love's giving; but meseemed
That in my dream all these were cast away,
And by God's judgment or through wrath of men
Or mine own fault or change and chance of time,
I lived too long to look for love in vain.
Many there are that hate me now of men;
Doth one live yet that loves?
George Douglas. If one there were
That for your love's sake should abhor his life,
Hating all hope save this, to die for you,
What should he do to die so?
Queen. If I bade
That for my love's sake he should love his life
And use its strength to cherish me, who knows
If he would heed? or say I gave command
To do some ill thing or of ill report—
Were it to slay our brother now gone hence—
Would one do that? I would not have it done,
Though I should bid him. Do not answer me,
As though I questioned with you seriously
Or spake of things that might be thought upon,
Who do but jest with grief as with my friend
That plays again familiarly with me,

And from the wanderings of a joyless wit
Turn to clasp hands with sorrow. You must go.

George Douglas. Ay, when you bid; but were my going from you
Part of your grief, which is more grief to me
Than my soul's going from forth my body were,
I would not set my face from hence alive.

Queen. I hold it not for no part of my grief
To bid you from me; yet being here bound in
As I with walls and waters, we should find
Less help than yet I hope for of your hand
Being hence enlarged. We will take counsel, sir,
And choose, with no large choice to make of friends,
To whom we shall appoint you, by what mean
To deal for our deliverance: as with one
Once of my household and this lady's kin
Who here of all my Maries the last left
Partakes my bonds: the Laird of Ricarton,
My husband's kinsman; and what readiest friends
Once more may be raised up, as when I fled
From shame and peril and a prison-house
As hateful as these bonds, to find on earth—
Ah, no such love and faith as yours in man.

SCENE V.—HOLYROOD.

MURRAY *and* MORTON.

Murray. I am vexed with divers counsels, and my will
Sees nor its way nor end. This act proclaimed

That seals the charge of murder on the queen
To justify our dealing had to it hands
That here first met; Kirkaldy with Glencairn,
Balfour with Maitland, Huntley with Argyle,
True man with traitor, all were as one mind,
One tongue to tax her with complicity,
Found art and part with them that slew her lord;
Men praised the council for this judgment given
As from a single and a resolute soul;
Scarce one withstood save Herries, and his voice
Was as a wind that sings in travellers' ears
Unheeded; then the doom that gives to death
All that in act maintain the former faith
And writes for Catholic traitor, should have purged
The state of treacherous or of dangerous friends
Such as made protest then against this law
And fled from our part to the Hamiltons,
Caithness and Athol, with the bishop called
Of Murray, whom the Assembly met to judge
By one same doom has with Argyle condemned
To stand in sackcloth for adulteries past
At Stirling through the time of service held
Within the chapel royal; such men's stay
It irks not me to lose, who by their loss
Were fain to win their enemies for my friends
More fast and faithful: but men's sundering minds
Nor council nor assembly can reknit,
Though Knox there sit by Maitland, and Balfour
Touch sides with Craig; and while the state as now
Lives many-minded and distraught of will,
How shall its hope be stable?

Morton. Some there are
Have all their will, or more than we that rule
By secular wit and might; the preachers reign
With heavier hand than ours upon the state,
Who in this late assembly by their doom
Bade your fair sister of Argyle partake
The sackcloth penance of her slippery lord
For scandal to the Kirk done when last year
At the font's edge her arms sustained our prince
For baptism of such hands as served the mass;
If it have leave long to sit lawgiver,
Their purity will pinch us.

Murray. Have no fear;
It shall not Douglas: and we lack their help
Who sway the commons only with their breath,
Now most of all when our high counsels fail
And hopes are turned as 'twere to running streams
That flow from ours to feed our enemies' hands
With washings of our wreck, waifs of our strength,
That melts as water from us; those chief twain
Whose league I sought by marriage, and had hope
To bind them to us as brethren, when Argyle
With me should knit himself anew, to wed
His brother to the sister of my wife
With happier hope than he espoused mine own,
While Huntley's son should lead my daughter home,
And with this fourfold knot our loves be tied
And fortunes with each other's growth ingraffed—
Both these look back now toward the Hamiltons
To mingle factions with them, being assured

Our hands now lack the secret sword we had
To draw at need against them, since their names
Set at Craigmillar to the bond of blood
Are with that bond consumed, and no tongue left
To wag in witness of their part of guilt
Now Bothwell's knaves are hanged that laid the train
And Hay with them, and one most near his trust,
His kinsman Hepburn, from whose mouth condemned
And Ormiston's we have confession wrung
That marks with blood as parcel of their deed
More than Balfour that in the assembly sit
And must partake his surety; this, my lord,
Craves of us care and counsel, that our names
Be writ not fool or coward, who took in hand
Such trust to work such treason.

Morton. Nay, no Scot
Shall say we fell from faith or treacherously
Let men's hopes fade that trusted us, and sank
Through feebleness of ours; yet have we strength
To lower the height of heart and confidence
That makes their faction swell, who were but late
Too faint of spirit, too fearful and unsure,
To be made firm with English subsidies;
Three thousand marks that Scrope by secret hand
Sent from Carlisle to Herries could not serve
To give or shape or sinew to their plots
Who are now so great their house's heir must wed
No lowlier than a queen, and Bothwell's wife,
For this divorced or widowed.

Murray. Ay; we know

The archbishop his good uncle with this youth
Hath in Dumbarton fortified himself,
And while they there sit strong and high in hope
Our prisoner and our penitent late, we hear,
Grows blithe of mood and wanton ; from her sight
Have I dismissed my mother's youngest born,
Lest in her flatteries his weak faith be snared
And strangled with a smile; and for her hand
I have found a fitter suitor than Arbroath
When she shall wed again, within whose veins
Some drops of blood run royal as her own ;
Methuen, whose grandsire was the third that set
His ring on that queen Margaret's wedded hand
From the seventh Henry sent ambassadress
To our fourth James, to bring for bridal gift
Her father's love and England's to her lord
And with the kiss of marriage on his lips
To seal that peace which with her husband's life
Found end at Flodden from her brother's hand
That split the heart of Scotland. So the queen,
If she wed Methuen, shall espouse a man
Whose father of the same queen's womb was born
That bore her father; and whose blood as hers
Is lineal from the seed of English kings
Through one same mother's sons, queen once of Scots
And daughter born and sister, though unqueened,
Of those twain Henries that made peace and war
With Scotland and her lord ; and by this match
The Hamiltons being frustrate of their hope
Could yet not tax us with a meaner choice

Than they would make for her, who while she lives
Must stand thenceforth far off from their designs
And disallied from all that in her name
Draw now to head against us ; and some help
We need the more to cross them now, that France,
To whom I thought to seek as to my friend
And thence find aid in this necessity
That else finds none, since England's jealous craft
Puts in our enemies' hands gold for a sword
More sharp than steel—France, that would send at need
The choice of all her sons that hold our faith
To live and die beside us here in arms,
Grows chillier toward us than the changing wind
That brings back winter : for the brood of Guise,
Our prisoner's friends and kinsmen of Lorraine,
Prevail again on Catherine's adverse part,
Whose hate awhile gives way to them, and yields
Our cause into their hands that were more like
To help this daughter of their dangerous house
Take up the crown resigned and through their strength
Renew this kingdom's ruin with her reign,
Than send us aid and arms to guard its peace
From inroad as from treason : which I doubt
We shall hear news of from my brother's tongue

Enter SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS.

Who comes without a herald.

Sir W. Douglas. Sir, the news
Is dashed with good and evil equally

That here I bring you ; for the treasons laid
Have missed their mark and left unwounded yet
My house's honour that retains in trust
So great a charge. You had word ere this of me
By what strange fortune was their plot made known
Who thought to fall upon us unaware
And find a ferry for some seventy swords
To cross the lake in mine own barge surprised
And smite those thirty guards that hold the walls
And make a murderous passage for the queen
To come forth free with feet that walked in blood ;
And how by one a Frenchman of her train
Who being not in their counsel heard some speech
Of such a preparation, and conceived
This was a plot to take her from your hand
Laid by the fiercer faction of the Kirk
That sought to snare and slay her in your despite,
To me was all discovered ; and betimes
I gave command no barge thenceforth should pass
Between the main shore and mine island walls,
But a skiff only that with single oars
Might be rowed over. Baffled thus, her friends
Were fain to buy the boatman's faith with gold,
Whom on suspicion I dismissed, but since
Finding less trust and service in the knave
That had his place, called back and bade take heed
Of these that would have won to their device
A foundling page within my castle bred
And called by mine own name ; who by this plot
Should have seduced for them my sentinels

And oped the gate by night; but yet I find
For all toils set and gins to take their faith
In him and them no treason; yet so near
Was treason to us, that not long since the queen
Had wellnigh slipped beyond our guard by day
In habit of a laundress that was hired
So to shift raiment with her; but being forth
Betimes as was this woman's use to come
In the low light by dawn, at such an hour
As she was wont to sleep the morning out,
The fardel in her hand of clothes brought forth
And on her face the muffler, it befell
That as she sat before the rowers and saw
Some half her free brief way of water past,
By turn of head or lightning of her look
For mirth she could not hide and joyous heart,
Or but by some sweet note of majesty,
Some new bright bearing and imperious change
From her false likeness, so she drew their eyes
That one who rowed, saying merrily *Let us see*
What manner of dame is this, would fain pluck down
Her muffler, who to guard it suddenly
Put up her fair white hands, which seeing they knew
And marvelled at her purpose; she thereat,
A little wroth but more in laughter, bared
Her head and bade stretch oars and take the land
On their lives' peril; which regarding not,
They straight put back as men amazed, but swore
To keep fast locked from mine of all men's eyes
The secret knowledge of this frustrate craft,

So set her down on the island side again
With muffled head and hidden hands, to wring
And weep apart for passion, where my watch
Looks now more strict upon her; but I think,
For all her wrath and grief to be by chance
From her near hope cast down and height of mind
Wherein she went forth laughingly to find
What good might God bring of her perilous hour,
She hath lost not yet nor changed that heart nor hope,
But looks one day to mock us.

Murray. So I think;
And in that fear would have you keep fast watch
By night and day till we take off the charge
Laid on your faith, and or enfranchise her
Or change her place of ward; which, ere the spring
That holds in chase this winter's flying foot
Be turned to summer, haply shall be done.
What fashion holds our mother with the queen?

Sir W. Douglas. As she was ever tender of her state
And mild in her own office, so she keeps
Observance yet and reverence more than meet
Save toward a queen, toward this her guest enforced
Who smiles her back a prisoner's thanks, and sighs
That she should smile in prison; but 'twixt whiles
Some change of mood will turn to scorn or spleen
Her practised patience, and some word take wing
Forth from her heart's root through her lips that hath
The gall of asps within it; yet not this
Turns the heart hard or bitter that awaits
Her gentler change, pitying the wrong it bears

And her that wrongs it for the sorrow's sake
That chafes and rends her.

Murray. Pity may she give
And be praised for it; but to entertain
Hope or desire that wars against her trust
Should turn that praise to poison. Have you seen
Since George went thence, or noted ere he went,
In her no token of a mingled mind
That sways 'twixt faith and such a faithless hope
As feeds a mother's love with deadly dreams
Of prophesying ambition? for in him
I spied the sickness of a tainted heart
And fever-fired from the most mortal eyes
That ever love drank death of.

Sir W. Douglas. No, my lord.

Murray. I would fain trust her mind were whole in this
And her thoughts firm; yet would not trust too far,
Who know what force of fraud and fire of will
In that fierce heart and subtle, without fear,
That God hath given so sweet a hiding-place,
Make how much more the peril and the power
Of birth and kinglier beauty, that lay wait
For her son's sake to tempt her. We will hold
More speech of this; here shall you rest to-night.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.—LOCHLEVEN CASTLE.

The QUEEN *and* MARY BEATON.

Queen. Is it not sunset? what should ail the day
To hang so long in heaven? the world was blind
By this time yesternight. The lake gleams yet;
Will the sun never sink, for all the weight
That makes this hour so heavy?

Mary Beaton. While you speak,
The outer gate that stands till nightfall wide
Shuts on the sundown; and they bring the keys
That soon the page shall put into our hand
To let in freedom.

Queen. I could weep and laugh
For fear and hope and angry joy and doubt
That wring my heart. I am sick at once and well:
Shall I win past them in this handmaid's dress
If we be spied? My hood is over broad;
Help me to set it forward; and your own
Sits loose; but pluck it closer on your face
For cloak and cover from the keen moon's eye
That peers against us. Twice, thou knowest, yea thrice,
God has betrayed me to mine enemies' hands
Even when my foot was forth; if it slip now,
He loves nor kings that hold his office here
Nor his own servants, but those faithless mouths
That mock all sovereignties in earth or heaven.
If here he fail me and I fall again

To sit in bonds a year—by God's own truth,
I swear I will not keep this wall of flesh
To cage my spirit within these walls of stone,
But break this down to set that free from these,
That being delivered of men's wrongs and his
It may stand up, and gazing in his eyes
Accuse him of my traitors.

Mary Beaton. Keep good heart;
Your hope before was feverish and too light,
And so it failed you: in this after plot
There is more form and likeness than in those
That left you weeping; let not passion now
Foil your good fortune twice, or heat of mood
From keen occasion take the present edge
And blunt the point of fortune.

Queen. If I knew
This man were faithful—O, my heart that was
Is melted from me, and the heart I have
Is like wax melting. Were my feet once free,
It should be strong again; here it sinks down
As a dead fire in ashes. Dare we think
I shall find faith in him, who have not found
In all the world? no man of mine there is,
None of my land or blood, but hath betrayed,
Betrayed or left me.

Mary Beaton. Nay, too strange it were
That you should come to want men's faith, and look
For love of man in vain; these were your jewels,
You cannot live to lack them; nay, but less;
Your common ornaments to wear and leave,

Your change of raiment to cast off, and bind
A fresher robe about you: while men live
And you live also, these must give you love,
And you must use it.

Queen. So one told me once—
That I must use and lose it. If my time
Be come to need man's love and find it not,
I have known death make a prophet of a man
That living could foretell but his own end,
Not save himself, being foolish; and I too,
I am mad as he was, now to think on him
Or my dead follies. Were these walls away,
I should no more; ay, when this strait is past,
I shall win back my wits and my blithe heart,
And make good cheer again.

Enter Page.

Page. Here are the keys;
I had wrought instead a ladder for our need
With two strong oars made fast across, for fear
I had failed at last from under my lord's eye
To sweep them off the board-head; here they ring,
As joy-bells here to give your highness note
The skiff lies moored on the island's lee, and waits
But till the castle boats by secret hands
Be stripped of oars and rowlocks, and pursuit
Made helpless, maimed of all its means; the crew
Is ready that shall lend us swifter wing
Than one man's strength to fly with; and beyond
Your highness' friends upon the further bank

Wait with my master's horses; never was
A fairer plot or likelier.
Queen. How thy face
Lightens! Poor child, what knowest thou of the chance
That cast thee on my fortunes? it may be
To death ere life break bud, and thy poor flower
The wind of my life's tempest shall cut off,
And blow thy green branch bare. Many there be
Have died, and many that now live shall die,
Ere my life end, for my life's sake; and none
There is that knows, of all that love or hate,
What end shall come of this night's work, and what
Of all my life-days. I shall die in bonds
Perchance, a bitter death; yet worse it were
To outlive dead years in prison, and to loathe
The life I could not lose. This will not be;
No days and nights shall I see wax and wane,
Kindled and quenched in bondage, any more;
For if to-night I stand not free on earth
As the sun stands in heaven, whose sovereign eye
Next day shall see me sovereign, I shall live
Not one day more of darkling life, as fire
Pent in a grate, bound in with blackening bars,
But like a star by God hurled forth of heaven
Fall, and men's eyes be darkened, and the world
Stand heart-struck, and the night and day be changed
That see me falling. If I win not forth,
But, flying, be taken of the hands that were
Before laid on me, they shall never think

To hold me more in fetters, but take heart
To do what earth saw never yet, and lay
By doom and sentence on their sovereign born
Death; I shall find swift judgment, and short shrift
My justicers shall give me; so at least
Shall I be quit of bondage. Come, my friends,
That must divide with me for death or life
This one night's issue; be it or worst or best,
Yet have ye no worse fortune than a queen,
Or she than ye no better. On this hour
Hang all those hours that yet we have to live:
Let us go forth to pluck the fruit of this
That leans now toward our hand. My heart is light;
Be yours not heavier; for your eyes and mine
Shall look upon these walls and waves no more.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII.—THE SHORE OF LOCH LEVEN.

GEORGE DOUGLAS, BEATON, RICARTON, *with Attendants.*

George Douglas. I hear the beat of the oars: they make no haste:
How the stars thicken! if a mist would take
The heaven but for an hour and hide them round——

Ricarton. How should they steer then straight? we lacked but light,
And these are happy stars that sign this hour
With earnest of good fortune; and betimes
See by their favour where the prize we seek
Is come to port.

Enter the QUEEN, MARY BEATON, *Page, and a Girl attending.*

Queen. Even such a night it was
I looked again for to deliver me,
Remembering such a night that broke my bonds
Two wild years past that brought me through to this;
The wind is loud beneath the mounting moon,
And the stars merry. Noble friends, to horse;
When I shall feel my steed exult with me,
I will give thanks for each of your good deeds
To each man's several love. I know not yet
That I stand here enfranchised; for pure joy
I have not laid it yet to heart; methinks
This is a lightning in my dreams to-night
That strikes and is not, and my flattered eyes
Must wake with dawn in bonds. Douglas, I pray,
If it be not but as a flash in sleep
And no true light now breaking, tell me you,
That were my prison's friend; I will believe
I am free as fire, free as the wind, the night,
All glad fleet things of the airier element
That take no hold on earth; for even like these
Seems now the fire in me that was my heart
And is a song, a flame, a burning cloud
That moves before the sun at dawn, and fades
With fierce delight to drink his breath and die.
If ever hearts were stabbed with joy to death,
This that cleaves mine should do it, and one sharp
stroke

Pierce through the thrilled and trembling core like steel
And cut the roots of life. Nay, I am crazed,
To stand and babble like one mad with wine,
Stung to the heart and bitten to the brain
With this great drink of freedom; O, such wine
As fills man full of heaven, and in his veins
Becomes the blood of gods. I would fain feel
That I were free a little, ere that sense
Be put to use; those walls are fallen for me,
Those waters dry, those gaolers dead, and this
The first night of my second reign, that here
Begins its record. I will talk no more
Nor waste my heart in joyous words, nor laugh
To set my free face toward the large-eyed sky
Against the clear wind and the climbing moon,
And take into mine eyes and to my breast
The whole sweet night and all the stars of heaven,
But put to present work the heart and hand
That here rise up a queen's. Bring me to horse;
We will take counsel first of speed, and then
Take time for counsel.

Beaton. Madam, here at hand
The horses wait: Lord Seyton rides with us
Hence to Queen's Ferry, where beyond the Forth
We reach Claude Hamilton, who with fresh steeds
Expects us; to Long Niddry thence, and there
Draw rein among the Seytons, ere again
We make for Hamilton, whose walls should see
The sun and us together.

Queen. Well devised.

Where is the girl that fled with us, and gave
These garments for my surety? she shall have
Her part in my good hour, that in mine ill
Did me good service.

Ricarton. Madam, she must stay;
We have not steeds enough, and those we have
May bear no load more than perforce they must,
Or we not hope to speed.

Queen. Nay, she shall go,
Not bide in peril of mine enemies here
While we fly scatheless hence.

Girl. Most gracious queen,
Of me take no such care: I am well content
They should do with me all they would, and I
Live but so long to know my queen as safe
As I for her die gladly.

Ricarton. She says well;
Get we to horse. I must ride south to rouse
My kinsfolk, and with all our Hepburn bands
Seize on Dunbar; whence northward I may bear
Good tidings to your lord.

Queen. God make them good
That he shall hear of me, and from his mouth
Send me good words and comfort! You shall ride
Straight from Lord Seyton's with my message borne
To all good soldiers of your clan and mine
And wake them for our common lord's dear love
To strike once more, or never while they live
Be called but slaves and kinless: then to him
For whom the bonds that I put off to night

Were borne and broken. Douglas, of that name
Most tender and most true to her that was
Of women most unfriended, and of queens
Most abject and unlike to recompense,
Take in your hand the hand that it set free,
And lead me as you led me forth of bonds
To my more perfect freedom. Sirs, to horse. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VIII.—HAMILTON CASTLE.

The QUEEN, ARGYLE, *and* HUNTLEY.

Queen. I ever thought to find your faiths again
When time had set me free; nor shall my love
To my good friends be more unprofitable
Than was my brother's, from whose promised hand
Both have withdrawn the alliance of your own
To plight once more with mine: your son, my lord,
And, noble sir, your brother, will not fail
Of worthier wedlock and of trustier ties
Than should have bound them to a traitor's blood,
His daughter, and the sister of his wife,
Whom he so thought to honour, and in them
Advance his counsels and confirm his cause
Through your great names allied, who now take part
More worthily with one long overthrown
And late rerisen with many a true man's more
And royally girt round with many a friend's;
Nor need we lay upon our kinsmen here
All our hope's burden, nor submit our hand

To marriage with our cousin's of Arbroath
For fault of other stay. For mine own mind,
I would stand rather on Dumbarton rock
Walled in with Fleming's spears, than here sit fast
With these six thousand ranged about the walls
That five days' suns have brought to strengthen me
Since I fled hither in these poor same weeds
That yet for need I wear. Now, by the joy
I had that night to feel my horse beneath
Bound like my heart that through those darkling ways
Shot sunwards to the throne, I do not think
Thus to sit long at wait, who have the hands
Subscribed here of so many loyal lords
To take no thought but of their faith to me
Nor let dissension touch their hearts again
Till I sit crowned as arbitress of all
When the great cause is gained. Each bloodless day
Makes our foes greater ; from Dunbar Lord Hume,
Who thence with hand too swift cut off our friends,
Brings now six hundred to my brother's flag
Who hangs hard by us, and from Edinburgh
Grange leads his hundreds ; all the Glasgow folk,
For love of Lennox, with the Lothian carles,
Draw round their regent hither ; and God knows
These are no cowards nor men vile esteemed
That stand about him ; better is he served
Of them than we of Herries, whose false wit
Works with an open face and a close heart
For other ends than live upon his tongue
And fill with protestation those loud lips

That plead and swear on both sides ; he would stand
My counsellor, yet has not craft enough
To draw those enemies hence that watch us here
By tumult raised along the border side
For none to quell but Murray, who was bound
From Glasgow where he lies yet to Dumfries,
But halts to gather head and fall on us
When we set forth ; which by my private will
I would not yet, but that my kinsmen yearn
To bid him battle and with victory won
Seize to themselves the kingdom by my hand,
Which they should wield then at their will, and wed
To their next heir's ; so should ye have their seed
For kings of Scotland, who were leagued ere this
With our main foes, and to their hands but late
By composition and confederacy
Would have given up my life to buy their ends
Even with the blood whose kinship in their veins
They thought should make them royal.

Argyle. We must fear
These days that fleet and bring us no more strength
Bring to the regent comfort and good hope
From England of a quiet hand maintained
Upon the borders, and such present peace
As fights against us there upon his side
While he stands fast and gathers friends, who had
But common guard about him when your grace
Fled hither first, yet would not at the news
For dread of our near neighbourhood turn back
With that thin guard to Stirling ; and by this

The chiefs of all his part are drawn to him,
Morton and Mar, Semple with Ochiltree,
And they that wrung forth of your royal hand
The writing that subscribed it kingdomless:
All these are armed beneath him.

Queen. These are strong,
Yet are our friends not weaker; twain alone,
You twain with whom I speak, being on my side,
I would not fear to bide the feud of these;
And here are Cassilis, Eglinton, Montrose,
Ross, Crawford, Errol, Fleming, Sutherland,
Herries with Maxwell, Boyd and Oliphant,
And Livingstone, and Beaumont that was sent
To speak for France as with mine uncle's tongue
Pleading with those my traitors for that life
Which here he finds enfranchised; and all these
As one true heart to me and faithful hand,
In God's name and their honour's leagued as friends
Who till mine enemies be cast down will know
Nought save their duty to me, that no strife
Shall rend in sunder, and no privy jar
Rive one from other that stands fast by me.
This have they sworn; and by my trust in them,
I will not doubt with favour or with force
To quell the hardiest heart set opposite.
Have I not sent forth word of amnesty
To every soul in Scotland free save these,
The top and crown of traitors, Morton first,
And Lindsay, from whose hand I took a pledge
To be redeemed with forfeit of his head;

Semple, that writ lewd ballads of my love,
And that good provost whom I swore to give
For one night's prison given me in his house
A surer gaol for narrower resting-place
Than that wherein I rested not; and last
Balfour, that gave my lord's trust up and mine?
Upon these five heads fallen will I set foot
When I tread back the stair that mounts my throne;
All others shall find grace; yea, though their hearts
Were set more stark against me and their hands
More dangerous aimed than these; for this God knows,
My heart more honours and shall ever love
A hardy foe more than a coward friend;
And Hume and Grange, mine enemies well approved,
Could love or recompense reknit their faiths
To my forsworn allegiance, in mine eyes
Should stand more clear than unrevolted men
Whose trustless faith is further from my trust
Than from my veins the nearness of their blood.
I am not bitter-hearted, nor take pride
To keep the record of wrongs done to me
For privy hate to gnaw upon, and fret
Till all its wrath be wroken; I desire
Not blood so much of them that seek mine own
As victory on them, who being but subdued
For me may live or die my subjects: this
I care not if I win with liberal words
Or weapons of my friends, for love or fear,
Or by their own dissensions that may spring

And blossom to my profit; and I hold
Nor fear nor grief grievous nor terrible
That might buy victory to me, for whose sake
Peril and pain seem pleasant, and all else
That men thirst after as I thirst for this,
Wealth, honour, pleasure, all things weighed therewith
Seem to my soul contemptible and vile.
Nor would I reign that I might take revenge,
But rather be revenged that I might reign.
For to live conquered and put on defeat,
To sit with humbled head and bear base life,
Endure the hours to mock me, and the days
To take and give me as a bondslave up
For night by night to tread on—while death lives
And may be found or man lay hold on him,
I will not have this to my life, but die.
I know not what is life that outlives hope,
But I will never; when my power were past,
My kingdom gone, my trust brought down, my will
Frustrate, I would not live one heartless hour
To think what death were gentlest; none so sharp
But should be softer to my bosom found
Than that which felt it strike.

Huntley. You speak as ever
Your own high soul and speech; no spirit on earth
Was ever seen more kinglike than lifts up
With yours our hearts to serve you for its sake
As these have served that here would speak with you,

Enter BEATON *and* MARY BEATON.

To whom our loves yield place.

[*Exeunt* ARGYLE *and* HUNTLEY.

Queen. My chance were ill
If to no better love your loves gave way
Than that which makes us friends.—You are come betimes,
If you come ready now to ride; here lie
The letters you must bear: the cardinal's this,
Mine uncle's of Lorraine, to whose kind hand
Did I commend the first news of my flight
Sent from Lord Seyton's while our horses breathed;
By this shall he receive my mind writ large
And turn his own to help me. Look you say
Even as I write, you left me in such mind
As he would know me, for all past faults done
Bent but to seek of God and of the world
Pardon; as knowing that none but only God
Has brought me out of bonds, and inly fixed
In perfect purpose for his mercy shown
To show a thankful and a constant heart,
As simple woman or as queen of Scots,
In life and death fast cleaving to his Church,
As I would have him that shall read believe
My life to come shall only from his lips
Take shape and likeness, by their breath alone
Still swayed and steered; to whom you know I look
For reconciling words that may subdue
To natural pity of my labouring cause

The queen that was my mother and her son
My brother king that in my husband's seat
Sits lineal in succession. Say too this,
That without help I may not hold mine own,
And therefore shall he stand the more my friend
And do the kindlier the more haste he makes
With all good speed to raise and to despatch
A levy of a thousand harquebusmen
To fill the want up of my ranks, that yet
Look leaner than mine enemies'. This for France;
And this to the English queen delivering say,
I look being free now for that help of hers
That in my last year's bonds not once or twice
I had by word of promise, and not doubt
This year to have indeed: which if I may,
When from her hand I take my crown again,
I shall thenceforth look for no other friend
And try no further faith. This private word
In London to the ambassador of Spain
Fail not to bear, that being set round with spies
I may not write; but he shall tell his king
The charges that men cast on me are false,
And theirs the guilt that held me in their bonds
Who stand in spirit firm to one faith with him
From whom I look for counsel. I well think
My sister's love shall but desire to hold
A mean betwixt our parties, and pronounce
On each side judgment, as by right and might
'Twixt mine and me the imperial mediatress,
Commanding peace, controlling war, that must

Determine this dark time and make alone
An end of doubt and danger; which perchance
May come before her answer. Haste, and thrive.
[*Exit* BEATON.
Now, what say you? shall fortune stand our friend
But long enough to seem worth hope or fear,
Or fall too soon from us for hope to help
Or fear to hurt more than an hour of chance
Might make and unmake? This were now my day
To try the soothsaying of men's second sight
Who read beyond the writing of the hour
And utter things unborn; now would I know,
And yet I would not, how my life shall move
And toward what end for ever; which to know
Should help me not to suffer, nor undo
One jot that must be done or borne of me,
Nor take one grain away. I would not know it;
For one thing haply might that knowledge do,
Or one thing undo—to bring down the heart
Wherewith I now expect it. We shall know,
When we shall suffer, what God's hour will bring;
If filled with wrath full from his heavy hand,
Or gently laid upon us. I do think,
If he were wroth with aught once done of me,
That anger should be now fulfilled, and this
His hour of comfort; for he should not stand,
For his wrath's sake with me, mine enemies' friend,
Who are more than mine his enemies. Never yet
Did I desire to know of God or man
What was designed me of them; nor will now

For fear desire the knowledge. What I may,
That will I foil of all men's enmities,
And what I may of hope and good success
Take, and praise God. Yet thus much would I know,
If in your sight, who have seen my whole life run
One stream with yours since either had its spring,
My chance to come look foul or fair again
By this day's light and likelihood.

Mary Beaton. In sooth,
No soothsayer am I, yet so far a seer,
That I can see but this of you and me,
We shall not part alive.

Queen. Dost thou mean well?
Thou hast been constant ever at my hand
And closest when the worst part of my fate
Came closest to me; firm as faith or love
Hast thou stood by my peril and my pain,
And still where I found these there found I thee,
And where I found thee these were not far off.
When I was proud and blithe (men said) of heart,
And life looked smooth and loving in mine eyes,
Thou wouldst be sad and cold as autumn winds,
Thy face discomfortable, and strange thy speech,
Thy service joyless; but when times grew hard,
And there was wind and fire in the clear heaven,
Then wast thou near; thy service and thy speech
Were glad and ready; in thine eyes thy soul
Seemed to sit fixed at watch as one that waits
And knows and is content with what shall be.

Nor can I tell now if thy sight should put
More faith in me or fear, to trust or doubt
The chance forefigured in thee ; for thou art
As 'twere my fortune, faithful as man's fate,
Inevitable ; I cannot read the roll
That I might deem were hidden in thy hand
Writ with my days to be, nor from thine eyes
Take light to know ; for fortune too is blind
As man that knows not of her, and thyself,
That art as 'twere a type to me and sign
Incognizable, art no more wise than I
To say what I should hope or fear to learn,
Or why from thee.

Mary Beaton. This one thing I know well
That hope nor fear need think to feed upon,
That I should part from you alive, or you
Take from me living mine assurance yet
To look upon you while you live, and trace
To the grave's edge your printed feet with mine.

Queen. Wilt thou die too?

Mary Beaton. Should I so far so long
Follow my queen's face to forsake at last
And lose my name for constancy? or you
Whose eyes alive have slain so many men
Want when death shuts them one to die of you
Dying, who had so many loving lives
To go before you living?

Queen. Thou dost laugh
Always, to speak of death; and at this time
God wot it should beseem us best to smile

If we must think upon him. I and thou
Have so much in us of a single heart
That we can smile to hear of that or see
Which sickens and makes bleed faint hearts for fear;
And well now shall it stand us both in stead
To make ours hard against all chance, and walk
Between our friends and foes indifferently
As who may think to see them one day shift
From hate to love and love again to hate
As time with peaceable or warlike hand
Shall carve and shape them; and to go thus forth
And make an end shall neither at my need
Deject me nor uplift in spirit, who pass
Not gladly nor yet lothly to the field
That these my present friends have in my name
Set for the trial of my death or life.
Thou knowest long since God gave me cause to say
I saw the world was not that joyous thing
Which men would make it, nor the happiest they
That lived the longest in it; so I thought
That year the mightiest of my kinsmen fell
Slain by strong treason; and these five years gone
Have lightened not so much my life to me
That I should love it more or more should loathe
That end which love or loathing, faith or fear,
Can put not back nor forward by a day. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IX.—LANGSIDE.

MURRAY, MORTON, HUME, LINDSAY, OCHILTREE, SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS, KIRKALDY, *and their Forces.*

Murray. They cannot pass our place of vantage here
To choose them out a likelier. Let our lines
Lie close on either side the hollow strait
Flanked as the hill slopes by those cottage walls,
While here the head of our main force stands fast
With wings flung each way forth : that narrow street
Shall take them snared and naked.

Sir W. Douglas. I beseech you,
If you suspect no taint or part in me
Of treason in our kin, that I may have
The first of this day's danger.

Murray. No man here
Of all whose hearts are armed for Scotland hath
First place in this day's peril, no man last,
But all one part of peril and one place
To stand and strike, if God be good to us,
In the last field that shall be fought for her
Upon this quarrel. Who are they that lead
The main of the queen's battle ?

Kirkaldy. On their left
Lord Herries, and Argyle in front ; with him
Claude Hamilton and James of Evandale
Bring up their turbulent ranks.

Lindsay. Why, these keep none

That crowd against us; horse and mingled foot
Confound each other hurtling as they come
Sheer up between the houses.
Murray. Some default
That maims the general strength has in their need
Held them an hour delaying: our harquebusmen,
Two thousand tried, the best half of our foot,
Keep the way fast each side even to this height
Where stands our strength in the open. We shall have,
If aught win through of all their chivalry,
Some sharp half-hour of hand to hand at last
Ere one thrust other from this brow. Lord Hume,
Keep you the rear of our right wing that looks
Toward Herries and his horsemen; Ochiltree,
Stand you beside him; Grange and Lindsay here
Shall bide with me the main front of their fight
When these break through our guard. Let word be given
That no man when the day is won shall dare
Upon our side to spill one drop of blood
That may be spared of them that yield or fly. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE X.—ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD.

Enter HERRIES *and* SEYTON, *with their soldiers.*

Herries. If they of our part hold the hill-top yet,
For all our leader's loss we have the day.
Seyton. They stand this half-hour locked on both sides fast

And grappling to the teeth. I would to God
When for faint heart and very fear Argyle
Fell from his horse before the battle met
The devil had writhed his neck round; whose delay
At point to charge first maimed us; else by this
We had scattered them as crows. Make up again
And drive their broken lines in on the rear
While those in front stand doubtful. Charge once more,

Enter OCHILTREE *and* HUME, *with soldiers.*

And all this side is ours.—Lord Ochiltree,
Yield, in the queen's name.

Ochiltree. In the king's I stand
To bid his traitors battle.

[*They fight;* OCHILTREE *falls.*

Herries. Stand thou too,
Or give us place; I had rather have to-day
At my sword's end thee than a meaner man
To try this cause.

Hume. This edge of mine shall try
Which side and steel be truer.

[*They fight;* HUME *is wounded.*

Seyton. God and the queen!
Set on; this height once ours, this day is too,
And all days after.

Herries. Halt not yet, good friends,
Till with our bright swords we have crowned the hill
Whereon they stand at grapple. Close again,
And we ride lords at large of the free field
Whence these fall hurled in sunder.

Seyton. To the height!
Our fellows are fast locked yet with our foes;
Make up there to their comfort.

Enter LINDSAY, KIRKALDY, SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS, *young* OCHILTREE, *with soldiers.*

Lindsay. Sirs, not yet;
Ere ye win through there be more spears to break
Than there in fight are fastened. Stand, or yield.
Herries. The Highland folk that doubtfully held off
Are fallen upon our flank; hear you the noise?
Back, sirs, bear back: we are sped.
[*Exit with his followers.*
Seyton. The day is gone;
Let life go after; for I will not fly
To meet my queen's face as a beaten man.

Enter MURRAY, MORTON, *&c., with soldiers.*

Murray. Charge once, and then sheathe swords; the field is ours:
They fly now both ways broken. Some one spur
To bid those knaves that howl upon the rear
Cut short their quest of blood; they were too slack
Who are now so hot, when first the hunt was up;
They shall not flesh those fangs on flying men
That in the fight were bloodless.
Seyton. Men, stand fast;
Let not the currish cry of Highland hounds
Bark on your fugitive quarry: here a man
May fall not like a stag or harried hare,

But die more soldierlike than in the toils
With their loud pack upon him.
Young Ochiltree. Die then here
And pay me for my father, if God please
My life with his shall lie not on thy hand,
But thine on mine as forfeit. [*They fight;* SEYTON *falls.*
Murray. Slay him not;
I say, put up your sword.
Young Ochiltree. Sir, pardon me;
There bleeds my father yet: he too shall die.
Murray. Young man, nor he nor any of his part
When I say, Live. Take up your sword again;
And by this hand that struck it from your own
Be ruled and learn what loyal use it hath,
Which is not on its prisoner. Send forth word
That none take life of any man that yields;
Pursue, but slay not; for the day is won,
And this last battle ended that shall see
By Scottish hands the reek of Scotsmen slain
Defame the face of Scotland. While I live,
If God as on this day be good to her,
Her eyes shall look on her own blood no more.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE XI.—THE HEIGHTS NEAR LANGSIDE.

The QUEEN, MARY BEATON, FLEMING, BOYD, *and young* MAXWELL.

Queen. This is the last time I shall look on war:
Upon this day I know my fate is set

As on a sword's point. Does the fight stand still,
That we see nothing on that hill's brow stir
Where both sides lashed together?

Fleming. If the light
Tell mine eyes truth that reel with watching, both
Stand with spears crossed and locked so hard, and points
So fast inwound with such inveteracy,
That steel can thrust not steel an inch away
Nor foot push foot a hair's breadth back that hangs
On the hill's edge and yields not. Hark! the noise
Grows sharper and more various in its cry
Than first it was; there comes upon the day
Some change for good or ill; but for my charge,
I would not say *Would God my hand were there,*
But take its chance upon it.

Queen. Be content
To stand this day our soldier at her side
Who will not live to lay such charge again
On them that love her. Lo there, on the left
They charge again from our part.

Maxwell. There it is
My father fights; his horse are they that make
The hill's length rock and lighten as a sea;
Look where the waves meet as that wind of steeds
Sweeps them together; how they reel and fall
There with the shock from under of the storm
That takes in rear and breaks their guard and leaves
The right wing of the rebels cloven in twain,
And in the cleft their first men fallen that stood
Against the sea-breach. O, this gallant day

Shows us our fortune fair as her fair face
For whom we came to seek it, and the crown
That it gives back more glorious.

Queen. If we knew
How fares our van——Nay, go not from me one,
Lest we be scattered.

Boyd. Hear you not a cry
As from the rear, a note of ruin, sent
Higher than the noise of horsemen? and therewith
A roar of fire as though the artillery there
Spake all at once its heart untimely out;
Pray God our powder be not spent by chance
And in its waste undo us.

Queen. My heart is sick,
Yet shall it not subdue me while my will
Hath still a man's strength left. I was not thus—
I will not think what ever I have been.
The worst day lasts no longer than a day,
And its worst hour hath but an hour of life
Wherein to work us evil.

Mary Beaton. Here comes one
Hot-spurred with haste and pale with this hour's news:
Now shall we know what work it had to do
And what the next hour may.

Enter GEORGE DOUGLAS.

George Douglas. The day is lost.
There is but one way with us; here we stand
As in death's hand already. You must fly,

Madam, while time be left or room for flight,
As if there be I know not.

Fleming. Is the van
Broken?

George Douglas. Look up where late it stood so fast
That wellnigh for an hour the grappling ranks
Were so enlinked in front, the men behind
That fired across the rank of them before
And hurled their pistols in their enemies' face
Above their comrades' heads that held the van
Saw them yet reeking on the spear-shafts lodged
That caught them flatlong fallen athwart the staves
Fixed opposite and level, till a shot
Slew him that led behind the artillery up
As the first round was ended on our part,
And straight a gunner's linstock dropped, and gave
Fire to the powder-waggon.

Maxwell. But the horse—
We saw my father's with Lord Seyton's horse
Hurl up against the left side round the hill
And break their right wing in the rear.

George Douglas. Ye saw?
But not who brought them rescue, and bore back
Your father's force with might and ruin; Grange
And Lindsay, with my brother third, who fights
With the more bitter heart and hate to-day
For our name's sake to purge him of my deed
And wreak him on my friends; and would to God,
But for the service' sake I had to do,
He had met me whom perchance he sought, and slain,

Ere I had borne this news out of the fight
To bid you fly.

Queen. Where will God set mine end?
I am wearied of this flying from death to death
That is my life, and man's: where'er I go,
From God and death I fly not: and even here
It may be they must find me.

Mary Beaton. Nay, not yet;
Take heart again, and fly.

Queen. O, this I knew,
Even by thine eyes I knew it a great while since
As now by mine. Our end of fear is come,
That casts out hope as well. Let us make hence.
Perchance our help is in Dumbarton yet
Upon the rock where I would fain at first
Have set my feet; how say you, Fleming, now?
May we there make us fast?

George Douglas. The ways are thronged
With arms and noise of enemies; everywhere
The land is full of death and deadly cries
From throats that gape for blood; the regent's horse
Hold all the highway; and the straiter lanes
Stand thick with peasant folk whose hands are armed
With staves and sickles in their rage caught up
To strike at you for fault of sword or pike
Wherewith to charge us flying: no way is left
But south to Galloway and Lord Herries' land,
Where you may breathe but for a doubtful day
In the sea's sight of refuge.

Maxwell. In God's name

Take his good counsel, madam; as you know
The noble Douglas wise and true, believe
So shall you find my father's men and mine
In this great need.

Queen. Come, help me then to horse;
If I must ride some hundred miles to breathe,
As we must fly no less, I think, or fall
Among our foes that follow, in my mind
The worst it were not nor the unkindliest death
To die in saddle. I will not give again,
So please it God, into mine enemies' hands
My body up for bondage; twice or thrice
I have ridden hard by stars of March or May
With false or true men to my left and right
The wild night through for death or kingly life,
And if I ride now with few friends at hand
I have none false of them; or if as once
One ride with me that had my hate alive
Who rode with me to his own grave, and now
Holds me in chase toward mine—O, thou that wast
My hate and husband, whom these men to-day
Take on them to revenge, and in thy name
Turn all men's hearts against me that were born
Mine and all swords that served me, if thou be
A shadow at hand, a ghost unreconciled,
That waits to take his triumph, hear and see
If in this hour that smites me, which is thine,
Thou find one thought in me that bows my heart,
One pang that turns it from the thing it was,
One pulse that moves me to repent or fear

For what was done or shall be ; if thou have
But so much power upon me to be called
Less hateful or more fearful, and thy death
With aught of dread have clothed the thought of thee
That thy life had not ; if thou seest me fly,
Then must thou see too that thou shalt not see
In death or life one part of spirit or sense
In me that calls thee master. To God's hand
I give the rest ; but in mine own I hold
The perfect power for good or evil days
To keep the heart I had, and on myself
Lose not one jot of lordship ; so may God
Love me no less and be no slower, I think,
To help my soul than theirs more vile than mine
And made for chance to mar, whereon their fate
Has power as on their bodies. If he will,
Now should he help, or never ; for we leave
A field more fatal to us and day more foul
Than ever cast out hope. I am loth to go
More than to die ; yet come what will soe'er,
I shall no more. Thou told'st me not of this,
[*To* MARY BEATON.
But yet I learnt it of thee. Come ; we have
One dark day less of doom to see and live
Who have seen this and die not. Stay by me ;
I know thou wilt ; if I should bid thee go,
It were but even as if I bade thee stay
Who hast as far to flee from death as I. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE XII.—DUNDRENNAN ABBEY.

The QUEEN *and* HERRIES.

Queen. Talk not to me of France ; this man it was
That gave his tongue to serve my kinsmen's plea
Who fain had seen me plight at Hamilton
To their Arbroath my hand and kingdom ; nay,
I will not seek my fate at Catherine's hand,
Nor on those lips that were my mother's watch
My life hang weighed between a word and smile,
Nor on that sleek face of the Florentine
Read my doom writ, nor in her smooth swart cheek
See the blood brighten with desire of mine.
I will not live or die upon her tongue
Whose hate were glad to give me death or life
More hateful from her giving ; and I know
How she made proffer to my last year's lords
To take me from their bondage to her own
And shut my days up cloistered ; even such love
Should France afford me now that in men's sight
I stand yet lower, as fallen from this year's hope
To live discrowned for ever. Tell him this
Who rode with you behind me from the field,
And bid him bear his mistress word of me
As one that thinks not to be made the mean
For them to weave alliance with my foes,
And with the purchase of my bartered blood
Buy back their power in Scotland.

Herries. I shall say it ;

Yet this man's friendship, madam, might find faith
Who by so wild a way has followed you
To this third day that sees your flight at end,
Where you may sit some forty days secure
In trust and guard of mine.

Queen. Ay, here I might,
Were I well weary with my two nights' sleep
On this hard earth that was my naked bed
Whom it casts out of kingdom; but, my lord,
For thirty leagues and more of ridden ground
And two days' fare of peasants' meal and milk
I am not yet nigher but by two days to death,
Nor spent in spirit for weariness or fear
Nor in my body broken, that my need
Should hold me here in bonds, or on your faith
Lay a new charge of danger. Here, you say,
And Beaumont with you, I may bide awhile
The levy of my friends whose rallying force
May gather to me, or in their default
Hence to Dumbarton may I pass by sea
Or forth to France with safer sails, and prove
What faith is there in friendship. Now my mind
Is nowise here to tarry; your true love
Shall not for guerdon of its trust and care
Be tried again with peril, that as well
May be put by for your faith's sake and mine
So mutually made much of; nor shall they,
Whose wounds run red yet from their regent's hand
That on this border laid so sore a scourge
As late their blood bore witness, for my sake

Or give their blood again or lose their faith
That should for me be proven, and being found true
Bring them to death should we twice fail, or false
Turn their safe life to shame. This shall not be;
But I, content to make no trial of these,
Will hold them true and leave them unessayed
To live in honour. Friends I yet should have
Whose peace and life lie not in those men's hands
That would make prey of mine; their faith is firm
And their hearts great as mine own hope in them
Who look toward me from England; all the north
No less desires me than I need their love,
To lift our creed and cause up that lies low,
But wounded not to death. I have their names
Who first I think will meet me face to face
And lay their loyal hands in mine and pledge
Their noble heads for surety; lord and knight
Whose fathers yielded up their lives for faith
Shall fail not now to seek me cast out hence
And gird me fast with all their following round
And stalwart musters of their spearmen raised
To do me service of stout heart and steel
For these lords' sake that call me lady; names
That bear the whole might of this northern land
Upon their blazon, and the grace and strength
Of their old honour with them to that side
That they shall serve on; first the two great earls,
Then Dacre, Norton, Swinburne, Markinfield,
With all their houses, all the border's flower
Of ancient faith and fame; had I but these

To rise up when I call and do me right
I were not poorly friended, with no more
Than this for trust to lean on; but I think
To find not such friends only as their name
And cause should make in danger fast to mine,
To link our names in all men's eyes that read
Of faith in man for ever; even the queen
My sister's self shall fight upon my side,
Being either found my friend for whom she swore
If I were slain to fill this land with fires,
Or casting off my cause and me stand up
As much their enemy that partake my faith
As mine who lack not friends in all her land
That in this cause cast off will strike at her
For God's sake on my party. But indeed
I look to find not such a foe of her
As should have heart or wit to fight with me
Though she had will who has not; for her mind
Still moving like a blown and barren sea
Has yet not ever set so far toward storm
Or so much shifted from its natural tide
As to seem safe or prosperous for their sails
Who traffic for my ruin; and I fear
No wind of change that may breathe sharp on me
When once I stand in mine own name to speak
Before her face and England's. If she will,
By her shall I come back to reign her friend;
If not by her, then by their loves and hands
Who shall put off her sovereignty for mine.
There is not and there needs no better way

Than here lies fair before my feet, which yet
Are not so tired but they may tread it through
To the good end. My heart is higher again
Than ere that field it was, I know not why,
Which sent me hither. You shall write for me
Word to the warden of Carlisle, and say
Your queen seeks covert for her crownless head
With him the first in England; and thereon
Ere he send answer or to-morrow set
Will I pass over.

Herries. I would fain believe
His queen were true of heart, and all your friends
As strong to serve as faithful; yet may she
Have better will than she has power to make,
As it would be, your servant; and the land
Is many-minded, rent with doubt in twain,
And full of fears and factions; you may pass
Even in this hope that now builds up your heart
To find less help at no less need than here
On darker ways and deadlier: yet your will
Shall if it hold be done.

Queen. Despatch, and write;
To stand before the gate of days to be
And beat their doors for entrance is more pain
Than to pass in and look on life or death.
Here will I sleep within your ward to-night,
And then no more in Scotland. Nay, make haste;
I would those hours were past that hold me here.

SCENE XIII.—THE SHORE OF SOLWAY FIRTH.

The QUEEN, MARY BEATON, HERRIES, GEORGE DOUGLAS, *Page and Attendants.*

Queen. Is not the tide yet full?

Herries. Come half an hour,
And it will turn; but ere that ebb begin,
Let me once more desire your pardon, though
I plead against your pleasure. Here you stand
Not yet dethroned from royal hope, not yet
Discrowned of your great name, whose natural power
Faith here forgets not, nor man's loyal love
Leaves off to honour; but gone hence, your name
Is but a stranger's, subject to men's laws,
Alien and liable to control and chance
That are the lords of exile, and command
The days and nights of fugitives; your hope
Dies of strange breath or lives between strange lips,
And nor your will nor only God's beside
Is master of your peace of life, but theirs
Who being the lords of land that harbours you
Give your life leave to endure their empire: what
Can man do to you that a rebel may,
Which fear might deem as bad as banishment?
Not death, not bonds are bitterer than his day
On whom the sun looks forth of a strange sky,
Whose thirst drinks water from strange hands, whose lips
Eat stranger's bread for hunger; who lies down
In a strange dark and sleeps not, and the light
Makes his eyes weep for their own morning, seen

On hills that helped to make him man, and fields
Whose flowers grew round his heart's root; day like night
Denies him, and the stars and airs of heaven
Are as their eyes and tongues who know him not.
Go not to banishment; the world is great,
But each has but his own land in the world.
There is one bosom that gives each man milk,
One country like one mother: none sleeps well
Who lies between strange breasts; no lips drink life
That seek it from strange fosters. Go not hence;
You shall find no man's faith or love on earth
Like theirs that here cleave to you.

Queen. I have found
And think to find no hate of men on earth
Like theirs that here beats on me. Hath this earth
Which sent me forth a five-years' child, and queen
Not even of mine own sorrows, to come back
A widowed girl out of the fair warm sun
Into the grave's mouth of a dolorous land
And life like death's own shadow, that began
With three day's darkness—hath this earth of yours
That made mine enemies, at whose iron breast
They drank the milk of treason—this hard nurse,
Whose rocks and storms have reared no violent thing
So monstrous as men's angers, whose wild minds
Were fed from hers and fashioned—this that bears
None but such sons as being my friends are weak,
And strong, being most my foes—hath it such grace
As I should cling to, or such virtue found
In some part of its evil as my heart

Should fear, being free, to part from? Have I lived,
Since I came here in shadow and storm, three days
Out of the storm and shadow? Have I seen
Such rest, such hope, such respite from despair,
As thralls and prisoners in strong darkness may
Before the light look on them? Hath there come
One chance on me of comfort, one poor change,
One possible content that was not born
Of hope to break forth of these bonds, or made
Of trust in foreign fortune? Here, I knew,
Could never faith nor love nor comfort breed
While I sat fast in prison; ye, my friends,
The few men and the true men that were mine,
What were ye but what I was, and what help
Hath each love had of other, yours of mine,
Mine of your faith, but change of fight and flight,
Fear and vain hope and ruin? Let me go,
Who have been but grief and danger to my friends;
It may be I shall come with power again
To give back all their losses, and build up
What for my sake was broken.

Herries. Did I know it,
Yet were I loth to bid you part, and find
What there you go to seek; but knowing it not,
My heart sinks in me and my spirit is sick
To think how this fair foot once parted hence
May rest thus light on Scottish ground no more.

Queen. It shall tread heavier when it steps again
On earth which now rejects it; I shall live
To bruise their heads who wounded me at heel,

When I shall set it on their necks. Come, friends,
I think the fisher's boat hath hoised up sail
That is to bear none but one friend and me:
Here must my true men and their queen take leave,
And each keep thought of other. My fair page,
Before the man's change darken on your chin
I may come back to ride with you at rein
To a more fortunate field: howe'er that be,
Ride you right on with better hap, and live
As true to one of merrier days than mine
As on that night to Mary once your queen.
Douglas, I have not won a word of you;
What would you do to have me tarry?

George Douglas. Die.

Queen. I lack not love it seems then at my last.
That word was bitter; yet I blame it not,
Who would not have sweet words upon my lips
Nor in mine ears at parting. I should go
And stand not here as on a stage to play
My last part out in Scotland; I have been
Too long a queen too little. By my life,
I know not what should hold me here or turn
My foot back from the boat-side, save the thought
How at Lochleven I last set foot aboard,
And with what hope, and to what end; and now
I pass not out of prison to my friends,
But out of all friends' help to banishment.
Farewell, Lord Herries.

Herries. God go with my queen,
And bring her back with better friends than I.

Queen. Methinks the sand yet cleaving to my foot
Should not with no more words be shaken off,
Nor this my country from my parting eyes
Pass unsaluted; for who knows what year
May see us greet hereafter? Yet take heed,
Ye that have ears, and hear me; and take note,
Ye that have eyes, and see with what last looks
Mine own take leave of Scotland; seven years since
Did I take leave of my fair land of France,
My joyous mother, mother of my joy,
Weeping; and now with many a woe between
And space of seven years' darkness, I depart
From this distempered and unnatural earth
That casts me out unmothered, and go forth
On this grey sterile bitter gleaming sea
With neither tears nor laughter, but a heart
That from the softest temper of its blood
Is turned to fire and iron. If I live,
If God pluck not all hope out of my hand,
If aught of all mine prosper, I that go
Shall come back to men's ruin, as a flame
The wind bears down, that grows against the wind,
And grasps it with great hands, and wins its way,
And wins its will, and triumphs; so shall I
Let loose the fire of all my heart to feed
On these that would have quenched it. I will make
From sea to sea one furnace of the land
Whereon the wind of war shall beat its wings
Till they wax faint with hopeless hope of rest,
And with one rain of men's rebellious blood

Extinguish the red embers. I will leave
No living soul of their blaspheming faith
Who war with monarchs ; God shall see me reign
As he shall reign beside me, and his foes
Lie at my foot with mine ; kingdoms and kings
Shall from my heart take spirit, and at my soul
Their souls be kindled to devour for prey
The people that would make its prey of them
And leave God's altar stripped of sacrament
As all king's heads of sovereignty, and make
Bare as their thrones his temples ; I will set
Those old things of his holiness on high
That are brought low, and break beneath my feet
These new things of men's fashion ; I will sit
And see tears flow from eyes that saw me weep
And dust and ashes and the shadow of death
Cast from the block beneath the axe that falls
On heads that saw me humbled ; I will do it,
Or bow mine own down to no royal end
And give my blood for theirs if God's will be,
But come back never as I now go forth
With but the hate of men to track my way
And not the face of any friend alive.

Mary Beaton. But I will never leave you till you die.

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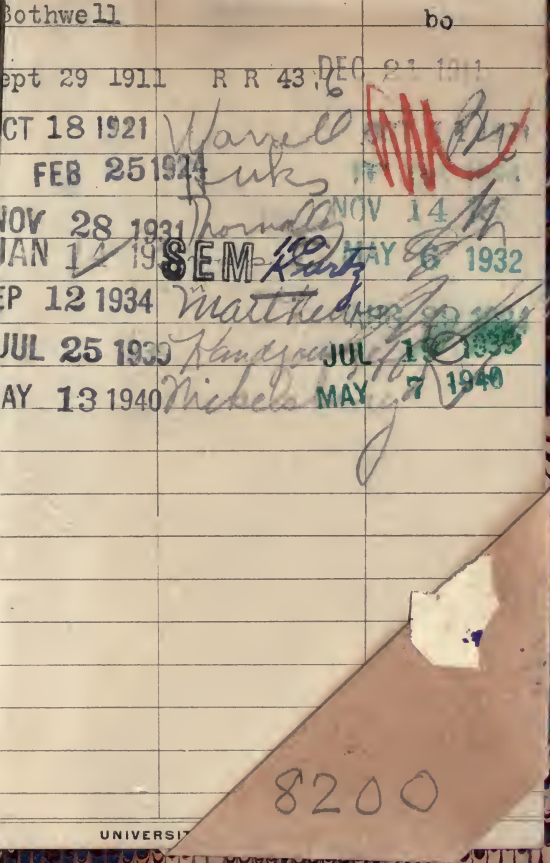

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